









# Major's classless honours still find privileged homes

BY ALICE THOMSON AND ANDREW PIERCE

WHITEHALL bureaucrats were appalled when John Major announced grandiose plans to make honours lists more classless two years ago. But the Sir Humphreys should not have worried. As the Queen's Birthday Honours are announced tonight, a survey by *The Times* shows that the Prime Minister's reforms have been a failure.

The civil servants were told that they would no longer automatically get a going for service to the Empire and instead awards would be going to hardworking lollypop ladies, deserving postmen and volunteer carers. But in the past two weeks, envelopes bearing the official crest have been arriving at homes of politicians and administrators, the armed forces and diplomatic service. Very few have gone to council estates.

Civil servants have consistently accounted for 17 to 20 per cent of honours before and after the overhaul of the system. Since the Tories came to power in 1979, the number of civil servants honoured every six months has been about 180. The figure has

fallen by just five since 1993. Only at the very top of the Whitehall tree is there a difference. Nine of the Permanent Secretaries, the highest-ranking civil servants, are knights compared with 15 when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister.

But they get there eventually. Sir Patrick Brown, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Transport, was knighted in 1995. Sir Tim Lankesier, Permanent Secretary at Education, knelt before the Queen in 1994. In the last honours list, Sir David Gillmore, former head of the Diplomatic Service, was given a life peerage.

The Government also looks after the business establishment. More than half the chairmen of the UK's top companies are knights or peers. Prior to the change in the system, up to 30 knighthoods were announced in each list, with eight going to captains of industry on average. The numbers in today's list will be broadly the same. One notable change has been in the increase in celebrities, sportsmen and explorers who

win awards. On current trends we will soon have Dame Anneka Rice and Sir Frank Bruno.

But it is only on the bottom rung that any real change is being felt. Since the British Empire Medal was abolished in 1993, nominations for Members of the British Empire have been encouraged from the public. The number soared from a trickle to 9,000 each year.

The result has been the appointment of an extra 100 MBEs, taking the total to an average 600 to 650 of the total 1,000 awards which are made in each list. Most of the 100 extra awards go to people working in the voluntary sector. There has been one lollypop lady, Violet Chater from Luton; Annie Musk, 90, who still cares for elderly patients at the Ramsgate Hospital, Kent; and a postman well-known for his charitable feats.

But whoever receives a gong today will do well to remember Sir Winston Churchill's warning: "A medal glimmers but it also casts a shadow."

Queen's Birthday Honours in full in tomorrow's *Times*.

## Tory party's wealthy benefactors feature prominently in awards

JOHN MAJOR'S pledge to reform the honours system has failed to have any noticeable impact on the number of awards to wealthy benefactors of the Tory party.

Since he came to power in November 1990, the Prime Minister has awarded five peerages and 45 knighthoods to industrialists. More than two thirds of those honours — 30 knighthoods and three peerages — went to directors of companies which have given millions of pounds to the Tories.

In June 1994 Sir Allen

Sheppard, a donor to party funds, and chairman and chief executive of Grand Metropolitan, was elevated to the Upper House as Baron Sheppard of Didgemere.

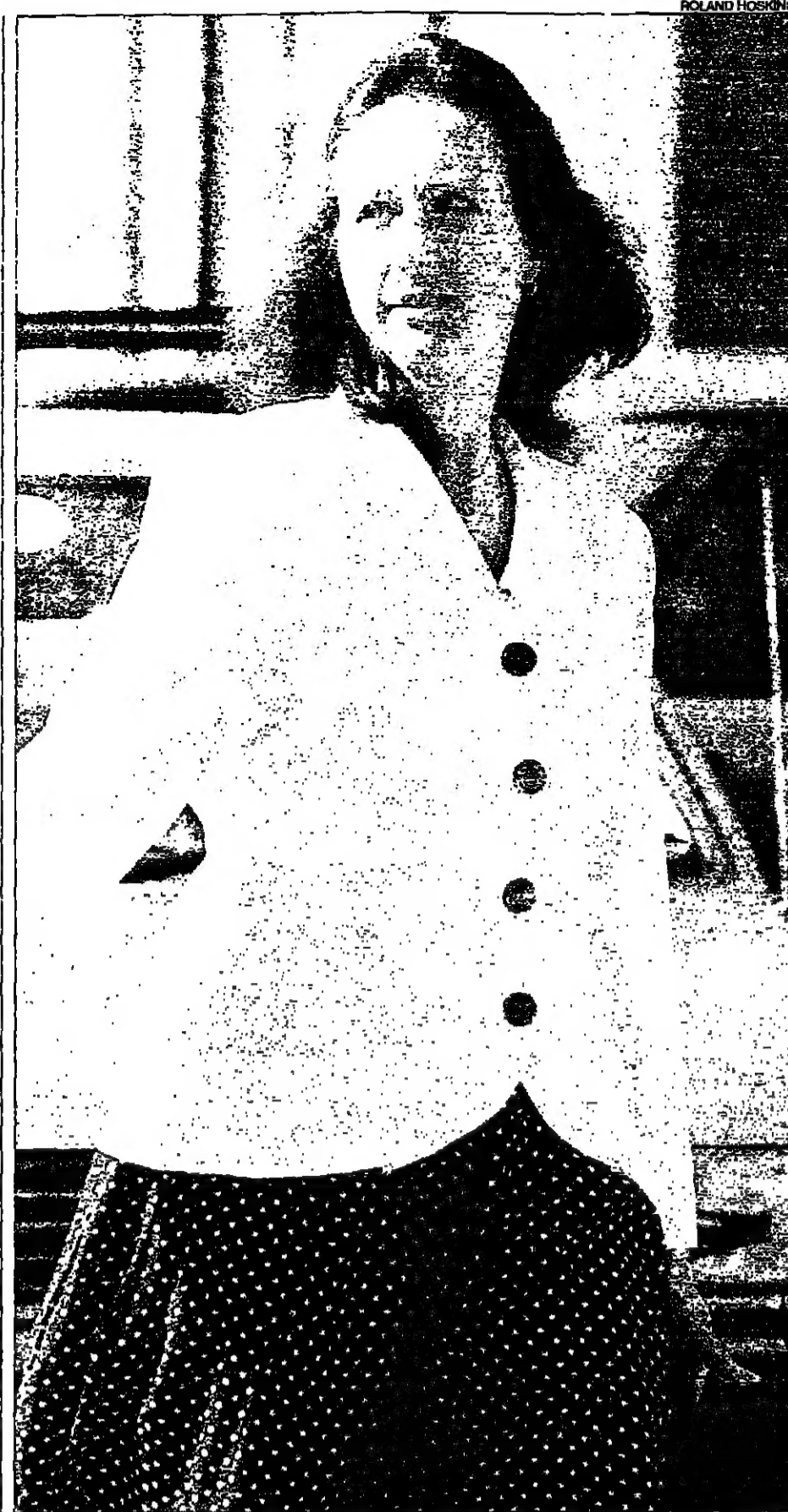
Sir David Nickson, a director of Hambros and Scottish & Newcastle, which have donated more than £1 million since 1979, became Baron Nickson of Kensington in January 1994.

The allocation of honours under Mr Major is broadly in line with the Thatcher years, when a total of 144 industrialists were given

knighthoods between 1979 and 1990.

An estimated 64 per cent had given funds to the Tory party. A further 27 industrialists were given peerages, of which 17 were connected to companies which had made donations to the Tories.

The Labour Research Department has concluded that almost half of all major honours awarded by Mr Major go to people who maintain and finance the Conservative Party. Downing Street maintains there is no connection.



Sheelagh Costaine arriving at Reading Crown Court for sentence yesterday

## Woman in hitman plot freed by judge

A SUNDAY school teacher who tried to hire a hitman to kill her business partner after a property deal went sour walked free from court yesterday.

Sheelagh Costaine, 39, collapsed and lay sobbing for ten minutes after the judge gave her a suspended two-year sentence. Later she went for a champagne lunch with her family.

Reading Crown Court had been told that Adrian Brookes, the man she approached to kill her partner for £10,000, informed the police, who set up a videotaped undercover operation to trap her.

The judge had earlier accepted that she had sought a hitman to murder John Tunstall because her irrational desire to protect her mother at all costs had made her lose touch with reality.

Miss Costaine had denied two charges of soliciting Mr Brookes and an undercover police officer to commit murder. The court was told she had said she wanted Mr Tunstall "shot, killed, eliminated". She maintained she was not being serious, but the jury found her guilty of soliciting to murder at her trial last month.

Mr Justice Sedley said yesterday: "Police carefully and properly set up a bogus hitman. The video tape does not show a distraught or irrational woman trying to have a man killed."

The judge, who told her he was sure she would present no danger to the public, said he had been seeking the right balance between justice and mercy. He said that Miss Costaine feared her mother was going to lose her home if Mr Tunstall pursued a financial claim. Miss Costaine, of Chesham, Buckinghamshire, owed Mr Tunstall £50,000 after an Italian property deal failed.

Philip Matthews, for the defence, said: "She clearly lost track with reality throughout the period of three to four weeks. She had become extremely disturbed."



Crosby: cricket and pint

## How Bing Crosby took the road to Dallowgill

By JOE JOSEPH

THE Bulgarian soccer squad may have snuffed at the tranquility of Yorkshire's beauty spots, but Bing Crosby just loved the Dales to bits.

Bing, famous for warbling while wiggling his head sideways at the same time, only visited the area once. But it seems he was smitten. It was a two-hour stay in the village of Kirkby Malzeard, near Ripon, on the opening day of the grouse season in 1976 that did it.

Crosby, who shot on the nearby moors, got on so swimmingly with the locals that he even donned cricket pads and took to the wicket. Then he popped in for a pint and signed autographs in the Drovers Inn at Dallowgill.

When Crosby died two years later, in 1978, Joan Kirk, a community worker, wrote to his widow, Kathryn, sending condolences from the people of Kirkby Malzeard. In return, Mrs Crosby sent two small poems that Bing had penned about his trip. Now the verses, both handwritten and signed, are featured in a book celebrating the charm of Nidderdale.

The book is called *Why Florida?* Its title comes from a contributor's remark: "While there is Yorkshire, there's no need to go to Florida for magnificent sunsets."

## Mansell accused of insider deal plan

By A STAFF REPORTER

NIGEL MANSELL, the former world motor racing champion, was accused in the High Court yesterday of being involved in an attempted £500,000 insider share deal with a convicted fraudster.

A preliminary hearing was told that Mansell was persuaded to hand the money to Anthony Collard, a golfing friend, who told him that he had eight million shares in a New York computer company that was about to be floated and he could make a "substantial profit".

Mark Howard said: "There is clear evidence of dubious conduct or possible criminality and fraud on the part of Mansell and Collard."

Mr Howard was representing a firm of solicitors and a property company sued by Mansell after Mr Collard used the money to put a deposit on a £650,000 farm in south Devon and to pay off debts. When Mr Collard failed to keep up the payments and was ordered out of the farmhouse, he vanished and later committed suicide.

Paul Norris, representing Mansell and his wife Rosanne, said that it was a "very sad set of circumstances" because of the allegations about the "propriety of the transaction" in which his



Mansell: handed over £800,000 to golf friend

clients were involved. He sought to freeze proceeds of any sale of the farm as the money could be "dissipated" and Mr Mansell, who was not in court yesterday, was entitled to recompense over the "loan" he gave to Mr Collard.

Mr Justice Lindsay refused to make an injunction against the owners of the farm, Walbrook Properties, which is owned by the Jersey-based accountants, Touche Ross.

"I have no reason to believe that it is anything other than a reputable company," he said, adding that it "would need to be investigated" at the full hearing when the Mansells try to retrieve their funds.

"There was comment about the bona fides of the Mansells themselves in joining with Mr Collard. No doubt at the trial all sorts of matters will come out." He added: "It would seem that the Mansells are victims of a fraud."

The hearing was adjourned until a date is fixed for a full trial.

## Theatrical agent owes £645,000 to stars she polished

By RUSSELL JENKINS

A THEATRICAL agent wept yesterday as she admitted to former clients at a creditors' meeting that she owed £645,000.

Sharon Hamper, whose lavish lifestyle was legendary in showbusiness circles, owes more than £200,000 to Caroline Quentin, star of the BBC comedy *Men Behaving Badly*. Craig McLachlan, a former *Neighbours* star, is owed £67,000.

Miss Hamper, 43, has 140 actors on her books and owes money to about 100. She came face to face with some of them at a closed meeting in a central London hotel that lasted for two hours.

She blamed the collapse of the agency on the failure to install adequate accounting checks after the resignation of her original partner, Sheila Neale, a trained accountant, about eight years ago.

Finbar O'Connell, of the chartered accountants Grant Thornton, said that Miss Hamper had now drawn up a sworn statement of affairs to be filed at Companies House. It shows that her company has £85,000 in the client account and outstanding debts of £645,000. "If there are monies earmarked for them in the client account, they will get it," Mr Thornton said.

Miss Hamper built her

agency — Sharon Hamper Management Ltd — on her ability to spot raw talent. Joanne Whalley-Kilmer was among those she groomed for stardom.

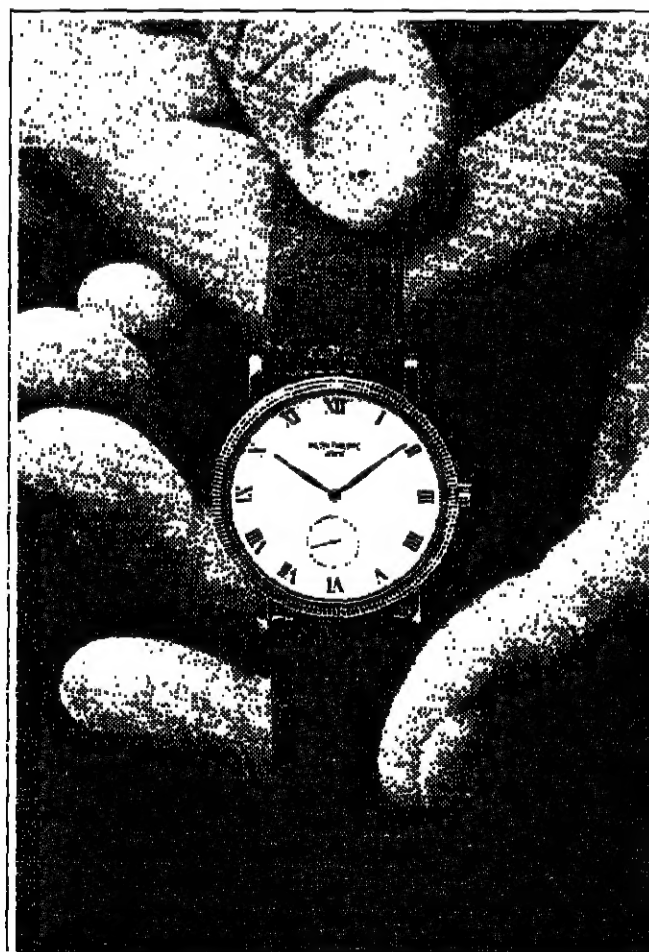
Helen Lederer, the comic actress, said: "It is devastating that money I have earned has disappeared. I am the main earner, and I have a child, and I don't have a rich daddy to bail me out."

Shaw Taylor, the presenter of *Police Five* and a creditor, said: "It's impossible to say if I will get my money back. I went to the agency after finishing *Police Five* after 30 years in 1992. I wanted to see if I could get back into acting — it's not been successful so far."



Hamper: wept as she faced former clients

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Mon's Calatrava - Ref. 3919

a particular Patek Philippe movement requires four years of continuous work to bring to absolute perfection, we will take four years. The result will be a watch that is unlike any other. A watch that conveys quality from first glance and first touch. A watch with a distinction: generation after generation it has been worn, loved and collected by those who are very difficult to please; those who will only accept the best. For the day that you take delivery of your Patek Philippe, you will have acquired the best. Your watch will be a masterpiece, quietly reflecting your own values. A watch that was made to be treasured.



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## Women and children second as men seize the day for television soccer

By ALEXANDRA FRIEAN  
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

WOMEN and children are taking second place in front of the TV set as men come home early from work to watch Euro 96 matches, ratings figures revealed yesterday. Daytime audiences have rocketed since the championship started last weekend and the main increase is made up of 2.5 million male viewers.

Afternoon programmes have long been the preserve of a mainly female audience and their young. But many of them — and some employers — appear to have left football seize the day, especially at 4.30pm when afternoon matches kick off. "Normally you might expect three million men to be watching across all channels at that time of day, but when a Euro 96 match is on the figure mysteri-

ously increases to nearly 5.5 million," an ITV spokeswoman said. The number of female viewers at that time has remained stable at around 4.5 million.

Both the BBC and ITV say they are pleasantly surprised at the strength of viewing figures for the afternoon games. Monday's nil-nil draw between Scotland and Holland scooped an average audience of 7.5 million for ITV, peaking at 10.2 million towards the end of the match. Italy's 2-1 victory over Russia, shown live at 4.30pm by BBC1 on Tuesday, had an average audience of 6.1 million and a peak of around eight million.

This is a good result — children's programmes screened at that time might attract 1.5 million each for BBC1 and ITV," the ITV spokeswoman said. Euro 96 organisers said many people had booked holidays from work to coincide

with the championships, but Doug Gummery, information manager at the Institute of Personnel and Development, said it was clear that many employees were being allowed home early.

"It would be difficult for managements to try to control attendance at work during these two weeks," Mr Gummery said. "Many seem to have accepted that they would be better off taking a flexible approach." The rise in job-sharing and flexitime in the past few years had made it easier for companies to organise cover for employees wanting to alter their normal hours. Mr Gummery explained, "There are all sorts of ways that industry can cope now. In a job-share between a man and a woman, for example, one of the two might arrange not to come in when there is a match on television. You can guess which one it will be."



## SECOND-HAND TOBACCO SMOKE IN PERSPECTIVE

# What risks do you take?

Almost every day, it seems that one thing or another has been discovered to be some kind of health risk.

In one scientific study, even drinking ordinary chlorinated water was linked to cancer.

But as common sense suggests (and scientists confirm) not everything described statistically as a risk is a meaningful risk.

For example, lots of people have been persuaded that second-hand tobacco smoke is harmful.

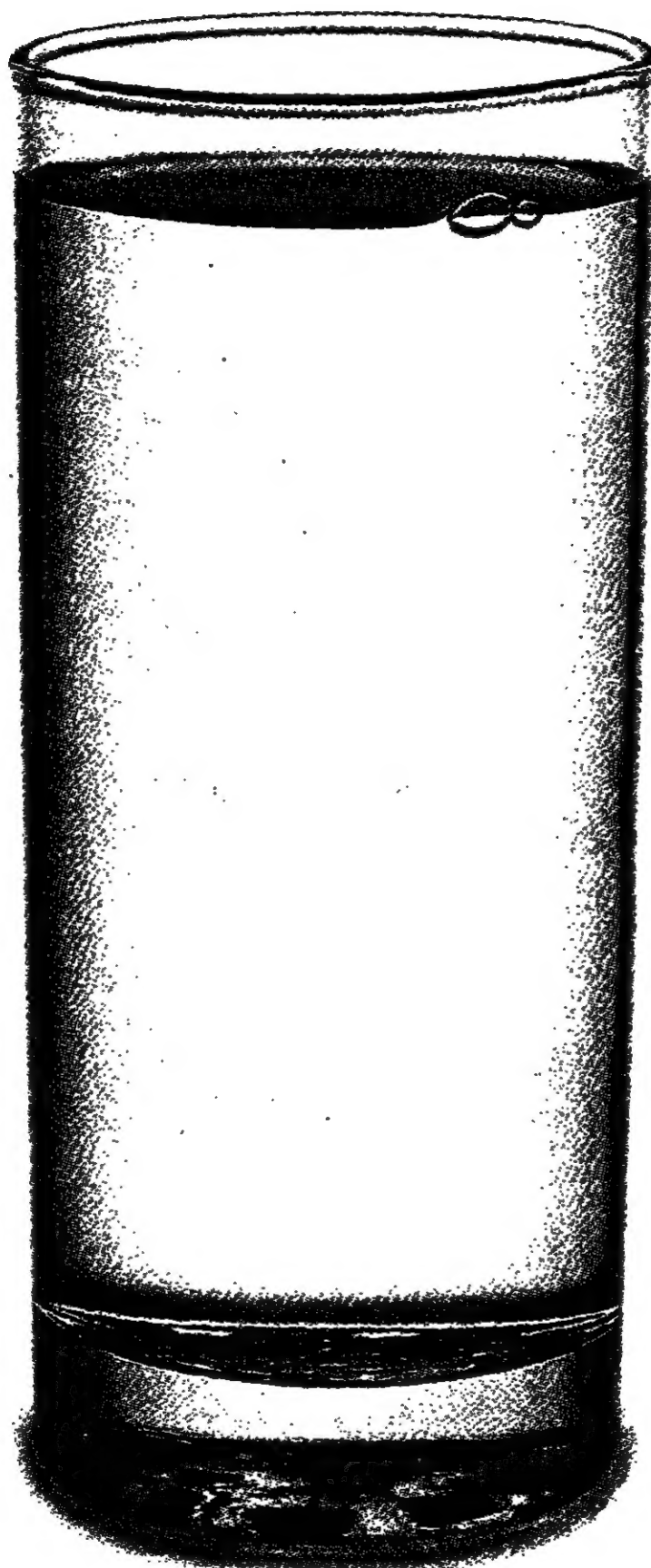
Not surprising, perhaps.

After all, we recognise that smoking itself is a risk factor for certain human diseases and that some people find second-hand tobacco smoke unappealing and unpleasant.

But what about second-hand tobacco smoke? Is it really a meaningful health risk to people who've chosen not to smoke?

Not, we think, if you look at the evidence.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency recently conducted a major review of studies on the risks of second-hand tobacco smoke to non-smokers. These studies typically involve non-smokers living with smokers over a long period, such as 20 years.



And this review put the risk of lung cancer from second-hand tobacco smoke at a level well below the risk reported by other studies for many everyday items and activities.

And below, in fact, the risk to health that one other study reported for drinking chlorinated water.

As the table below shows, many everyday activities have been statistically associated at one time or another with apparent risks to health.

But reputable scientists say that weak associations aren't necessarily meaningful.

So there's no big campaign to persuade you to stop drinking chlorinated water.

Nor is there any sound justification for a campaign against second-hand tobacco smoke.

If you'd like to decide for yourself, please write to us at Philip Morris Europe S.A., c/o P.O. Box 107, 1000 AC Amsterdam, The Netherlands or fax us on 00 31 20 671 98 89 or access us on: <http://pminfo.yrams.nl>

We'll send you the evidence about second-hand smoke.

We believe you'll find the case convincing.

Everyday Activities	Reported Relative Risk*	Reported Health Effect	Scientific Study Reference
Diet highest in saturated fat	6.14	Lung cancer	Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Vol. 85, p.1906 (1993)
Non-vegetarian v vegetarian diet	3.08	Heart disease	American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Vol. 31, p. S191 (1978)
Frequently cooking with rapeseed oil	2.80	Lung cancer	International Journal of Cancer, Vol. 40, p. 604 (1987)
Drinking 1-2 glasses of whole milk per day	1.62	Lung cancer	International Journal of Cancer, Vol. 43, p. 608 (1989)
Eating one biscuit a day	1.49	Heart disease	Lancet, Vol. 341, p. 581 (1993)
Drinking chlorinated water	1.38	Rectal cancer	American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 82, p. 955 (1992)
Eating pepper frequently	1.30	Mortality	American Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 119, p. 775 (1984)
Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke	1.19	Lung cancer	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1992)
High vegetable diet	0.37	Lung cancer	International Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 25, Suppl. 1, p. 32 (1996)
High fruit diet	0.31	Lung cancer	American Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 133, p. 683 (1991)

\*Relative risk measures how much consuming, or being exposed to something, raises or lowers risk. According to the US National Cancer Institute... "In epidemiologic research, relative risks of less than 2 are considered small and are usually difficult to interpret. Such increases may be due to chance, statistical bias, or effects of confounding factors that are sometimes not evident."

## Philip Morris Europe S.A.

Second-hand tobacco smoke. Let's keep a sense of perspective.

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## Coroner says victim of cowboy builders was unlawfully killed

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

A CORONER recorded a verdict of unlawful killing yesterday on an elderly man who hanged himself after paying three cowboy builders £4,000 to rebuild his garden wall.

Thomas Dando, 70, a former office worker, was found hanging from the banisters in his home on May 13 shortly after handing over his savings. "Had it not been for the difficulties surrounding this work, the death, in my judgment, would not have occurred," Paul Forrest, the Avon Coroner, said.

The verdict has led police to launch a hunt for the three builders. They said yesterday that a verdict of unlawful killing in a suicide case was very unusual. In cases where unlawful homicide is suspected and a criminal investigation is likely, the coroner will usually adjourn the inquest.

The Crown Prosecution Service has been informed of the circumstances of the case, in which the builders chose Mr Dando as their victim after

touring the Headley Park area of Bristol.

The inquest was told that they played on his fears that his small front garden wall could collapse and hurt children playing next door. They then took three days to assemble a two-layer breezeblock wall. They kept changing their estimate but eventually conned him into handing over two cheques for £2,000.

His former wife, Audrey, 64, said that she had seen Mr Dando three days before his body was discovered. "He was very agitated. I think he knew he had been conned and he felt responsible for it."

They gave him an estimate but when they finished they said it would be much more than they had originally thought and, being a gentleman and a man of honour, he paid up. I cannot believe people can be so unscrupulous, but I am glad the coroner has taken a stand."

Janet Morgan, 40, Mr Dando's next-door neighbour,

said: "I could tell they were not doing a professional job. He was going in and out to see what they were doing and I could see that he was agitated."

Marilyn Van-Meir, 55, another neighbour, who had known Mr Dando for 35 years, said she was approached by the builders who wanted to work on her drive. "They were very persistent and wouldn't take no for an answer. Tom was a very private person and a very nice man. You just wonder why he couldn't have spoken to somebody about it."

A spokesman for the Consumers' Association said: "Many people, especially the elderly, can be pressured into signing contracts for work they don't need done. I would always suggest that people check the credentials of the company before agreeing to them starting work. There will always be unscrupulous people who will take advantage of the helpless."

## Clark is fined £650 for breach of cordon

By ADRIAN LEE

ALAN CLARK, the former Conservative minister, was fined £650 yesterday for driving through a police security cordon in London.

Bow Street magistrates were told that, during a security alert in Piccadilly, Mr Clark drove his Land Rover within a few feet of a suspect package, which bomb squad officers were about to destroy. The incident happened in February, shortly after the IRA ended its ceasefire with a bomb in Docklands, and an explosion on a bus in the Aldwych.

Mr Clark, 68, who admitted obstructing the police, had argued with officers when they tried to stop him and had driven on. Andrew Harman, for the prosecution, said. The officers had to reset their equipment when Mr Clark breached the sterile area. The package was later found to be harmless.

Mr Clark, who was not represented, said: "I accept



Alan Clark after being fined £650 yesterday. As he left court he paid £5 of Thomas Cavanagh's fine for begging

that what I did was ill-judged and impetuous." He had written an apology to the Metropolitan Commissioner the same evening.

He had been trying to reach his office at the Albany. "There was no officer there, and I am not criticising him, so I foolishly took a chance to hop the short distance." Nicholas Evans, a stipendiary magistrate, told him: "You have shown remorse in recognition of what you have done. I have given you full credit for your guilty plea. But the facts of this case make it a very serious case and I am fining you £650 with £50 costs." Mr Clark, former MP for Plymouth

Sutton and a historian, offered to pay within 14 days. As he left the court he gave a £5 note to a homeless man to save him from a day in jail for begging.

Mr Clark, a millionaire who lives in a castle in Kent, had been chatting to Thomas Cavanagh, 32, who had been arrested for begging in the

Strand, as they waited for their cases to be called.

Mr Cavanagh said afterwards: "He asked me what I would get and I said probably a day in jail or a fine. Then he gave me £5 to pay the fine. It was very nice of him. I was fined £20 and now I have to get back to the Strand to raise the other £15."

## Girl due at Dunblane inquiry is missing

By STEPHEN FARRELL

A SCHOOLGIRL who was to have given evidence to the Dunblane inquiry has disappeared, leaving a despairing poem and a note saying she could not face reliving her memories of the killer.

Vicky Haggart, 15, whose mother Doreen waged a campaign against Thomas Hamilton, wrote of how she felt trapped in a private hell. Her mother said she feared Vicky was contemplating suicide.

In 1989 Mrs Haggart threw buckets of oil and manure over Hamilton in Linlithgow after visiting her son on a summer camp he ran for boys on Loch Lomond. She claimed Hamilton later pointed a gun at her outside her home.

Mrs Haggart, of Aberdeen, gave evidence to the inquiry on June 5, but her daughter, who was also invited, did not attend. Police told Lord Cullen there were discrepancies between the family's accounts of the alleged gun incident and other incidents on Loch Lomond.

Mrs Haggart said the day before she was due to appear Vicky wrote a note to Lord Cullen saying that eight and a half years ago many children had spoken out about Hamilton. "It would seem, as children, our word was not enough," Hamilton had given her nightmares, she said.

Mrs Haggart said she had hardly seen Vicky since returning from the hearing. Grampian Police said they were treating the case as a missing person inquiry.

## Catholic Unionist to chair Forum

By A STAFF REPORTER

A ROMAN Catholic Unionist is to chair the newly elected Northern Ireland Forum when it sits for the first time in Belfast today. John Gorman has made his first foray into elected politics at the age of 73 as an Ulster Unionist and has been named as interim chairman of the body by Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Ulster Secretary.

Forum members will decide whether they want him to stay in the chair during the first meeting. He will have the nomination of his party but needs support from 75 per cent of members present. The Democratic Unionists, currently no friends of the Ulster Unionists, will have 26 per cent, enough to veto him.

Mr Gorman, former chief executive of the Housing Executive, Ulster's public housing body, and regional director of the Institute of Directors, said he would like the job full-time if he was acceptable to members. He said he believed his background as an Ulster Unionist and a Catholic would bring a certain perspective to the role.

"I have often wondered why it was felt generally that people of one religion must vote one way and people of another religion must vote another," he said.

The 110-member body, elected on May 30, will have its first meeting in a former Co-Op store on the edge of the city centre. It is expected to meet once a week when the multiparty talks on the future of the Province are not in session.

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## Chronic indigestion can be checked out



**MEDICAL BRIEFING**

SUPERMARKET shelves are stacked with food and drink likely to make the flatulent and dyspeptic suffer: rich sauces, curries, chilli peppers, even cheese and white wine.

Safeway — whose wares are no more likely than rivals to cause indigestion — is now offering a pilot scheme in five stores in the London area, for a blood test which it is hoped will distinguish between those whose indigestion is related entirely to anxiety, gluttony, the wrong genetic inheritance or some more serious condition; and those where the cause is a chronic low-grade infection of the stomach and upper intestine with the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*. Initial studies show that most of those with chronic dyspepsia have the infection.

A spokesman for the pathology company that is running the service, said: "Although there has been a mixed reaction from the local GPs, most who have been in contact with us have been in favour. Some have even referred patients to Safeway for testing for *H. pylori*, and others have been in touch later to tell us how patients have not only lost their indigestion but have felt

better and are once again enjoying food."

The supermarket will test only patients who have longstanding indigestion. A careful history is taken by the store's nurse. Any patients who are *H. pylori* positive are told to see their GP.

For a price, the same stores will also test blood for cholesterol, anaemia and, possibly rather more controversially, allergies, using immunological tests on the blood. The charge is about £10 for the anaemia test and about £13 for the others.

Those doctors who object to the service have done so partly because they feel that once a patient has been diagnosed as having *H. pylori*, there is no option other than to prescribe expensive treatment, which combines an acid suppressant with antibiotics.

These doctors maintain that the long-term value of treatment is still being assessed; some estimates have suggested that up to 30 per cent of people may harbour *H. pylori* in their gastro-intestinal tract.

DR THOMAS STUTTFORD

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## Inspectors say poor marking is harming vocational courses

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

LAX marking and ineffective checks on standards are undermining the new job-related qualifications taken by sixth-formers, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools said yesterday.

General National Vocational Qualifications have been heralded by ministers as an alternative to A levels and are taken by one in four sixth-formers. However, Mr Woodhead said that standards of marking of basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills needed urgent attention, otherwise the courses would lose the confidence of students and employers.

He was speaking after Ofsted, the school inspection agency, published its third critical report on GNVQs since they were introduced in 1992 in an attempt to raise Britain's skill levels to those of its competitors.

Mr Woodhead said Advanced GNVQs, being taken by 200,000 students in subjects such as business, manu-

The Government said yesterday that it had introduced the educational measures necessary to improve Britain's international performance. A "skills audit", part of the White Paper on competitiveness published yesterday, said Germany had a "striking" lead at A level. The British workforce "scores poorly" on numeracy.

Business news, pages 26, 29

facturing and leisure and tourism, did not yet merit the title "applied A levels", the name proposed for them by Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. In his recent review of qualifications, School inspectors said teachers' judgments of students' work was unreliable in a quarter of schools. The inconsistencies were often not being picked up in checks by

the three awarding bodies: the Business and Technology Education Council; City and Guilds; and the RSA Examinations Board.

Inspectors visited 60 schools and colleges and were particularly critical of the continuous assessment of the "core skills" of communication, use of numbers and information technology. Ofsted said that in most schools, information technology was being graded by teachers who had little knowledge of the subject. Some were reluctant to fail students on aspects of their core skills if it jeopardised their success in the overall GNVQ.

The Department for Education and Employment said it was already acting to raise the standards of GNVQs. A £10 million grant, announced in April, would fund the preparation of rigorous tests for core skills as well as the re-writing of marking criteria.

Education, page 37



The report on Shaun Armstrong was condemned as a whitewash by Beverly Palmer, centre, whose daughter Rosie was murdered in his flat

## Rosie murder 'could not have been avoided'

By KATE ALDERSON AND RICHARD FORD

PSYCHIATRIC care given to a man who lured a three-year-old girl to his flat and murdered her was inadequate, a report on his treatment said yesterday. But it added that it was "impossible to conclude this tragedy could have been avoided".

The mother of Rosie Palmer, whose body was found in a bin bag in Shaun Armstrong's flat on the Headland estate in Hartlepool, said the report was a whitewash. Sane, the mental health charity, condemned "an appalling catalogue of blunders".

The report, produced by an independent inquiry set up by Tees Health Authority, highlights a number of warnings and allegations about the behaviour of Armstrong, jailed for life last year by Leeds Crown Court. A year before the murder, a senior social worker said Armstrong was likely to be a risk to any child he came into contact with. It also disclosed that he had been sexually abused as a child.

The mother of Rosie Palmer, whose body was found in a bin bag in Shaun Armstrong's flat on the Headland estate in Hartlepool, said the report was a whitewash. Sane, the mental health charity, condemned "an appalling catalogue of blunders".

Although much of his history was recorded in Co Durham, where he

grew up, the information was not passed to social service and health agencies when he moved to Cleveland and the flat close to Rosie's home.

The report said that although there were "inadequacies" in the care given to Armstrong, the authorities could not have known the degree of risk he posed or have predicted that he would eventually kill.

"The team conclude there were some inadequacies in care, but believe even if those inadequacies had not existed Armstrong's behaviour — and therefore the risk to others — could not have been predicted."

It added: "The inadequacies in the

care of Armstrong arose directly from shortcomings in clinical history-taking and in poor communications."

Beverly Palmer, Rosie's mother, rejected the report's claim that Armstrong's actions could not have been avoided. She said she could not accept the reasons given for Armstrong being allowed to move into the community. "I will never trust the authorities again," she said.

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of Sane, said: "This is another appalling catalogue of blunders." She added that it was "a clear case where mental health teams and care in the community failed everyone".

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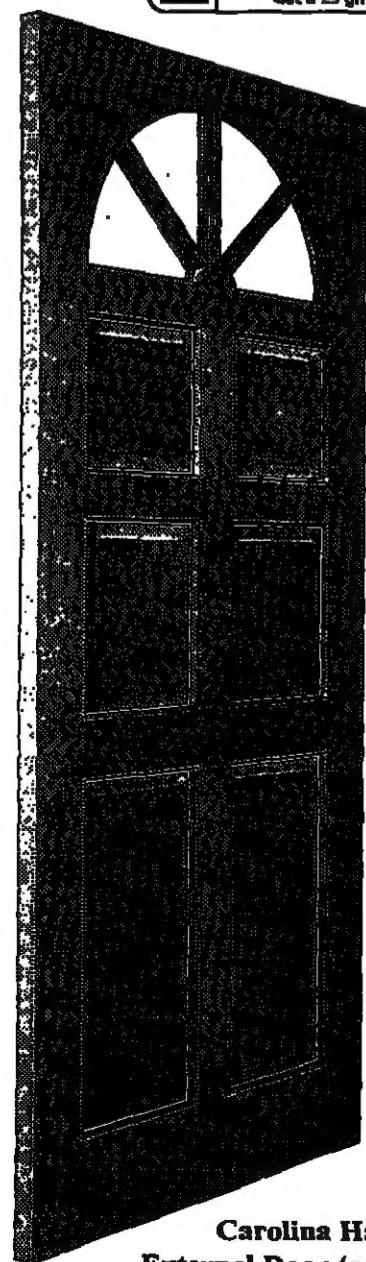


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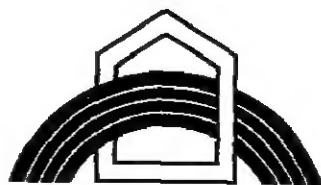
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### Colourful shrimp aids robot research

By PETER FOSTER

A PSYCHEDELIC shrimp with colour vision unrivalled in the animal kingdom could hold the key to a future generation of robots.

Dr Justin Marshall, a neuroscientist at Sussex University, has discovered that the eyes of the mantis shrimp, *Odontodactylus scyllarus*, contain at least twelve visual pigment types, three times that of humans. No other creature has more than five pigment types.

The shrimp's violent feeding habits — it stabs its prey with powerful front limbs — were used to show its powers of colour vision. Dr Marshall put food into coloured cubes which the shrimps smashed to eat. They rejected empty grey cubes. Tests showed that the section of the shrimp's eye which deals with colour is divided into six rows of cells, each receptive to a different colour, unlike human beings, whose eyes process colour in an integrated way.

It is this system of parallel rather than integrated visual processing which has been used by engineers as a model for designing robots. In the future it may be possible to create robots with infra-red and ultra violet capabilities.

### Cancer link to radon in homes unproved

By NIGEL HAWKES

HIGH levels of radon gas in the home do not generally lead to an increased incidence of cancer, according to a survey in Devon and Cornwall.

With the exception of non-melanoma skin cancers people in the two counties ran no greater risks of developing cancer despite higher levels of the gas in their homes. The findings of a team from Bristol University contrast with government assertions that increased levels of radon — an invisible gas that seeps into houses from the soil — increase the risk of cancers.

Reporting in the *European Journal of Cancer*, the team says there is substantial evidence to link radon with lung cancer among uranium miners, but an association between domestic radon and cancer is controversial.

The university study covered 1.4 million people and matched known cancer cases with certified radon levels. Only with non-melanoma skin cancers was a link apparent between cases and high levels of radon.

Dr David Etherington, from the unit, said: "It is reassuring that our study does not support a large-scale risk from elevated radon levels."

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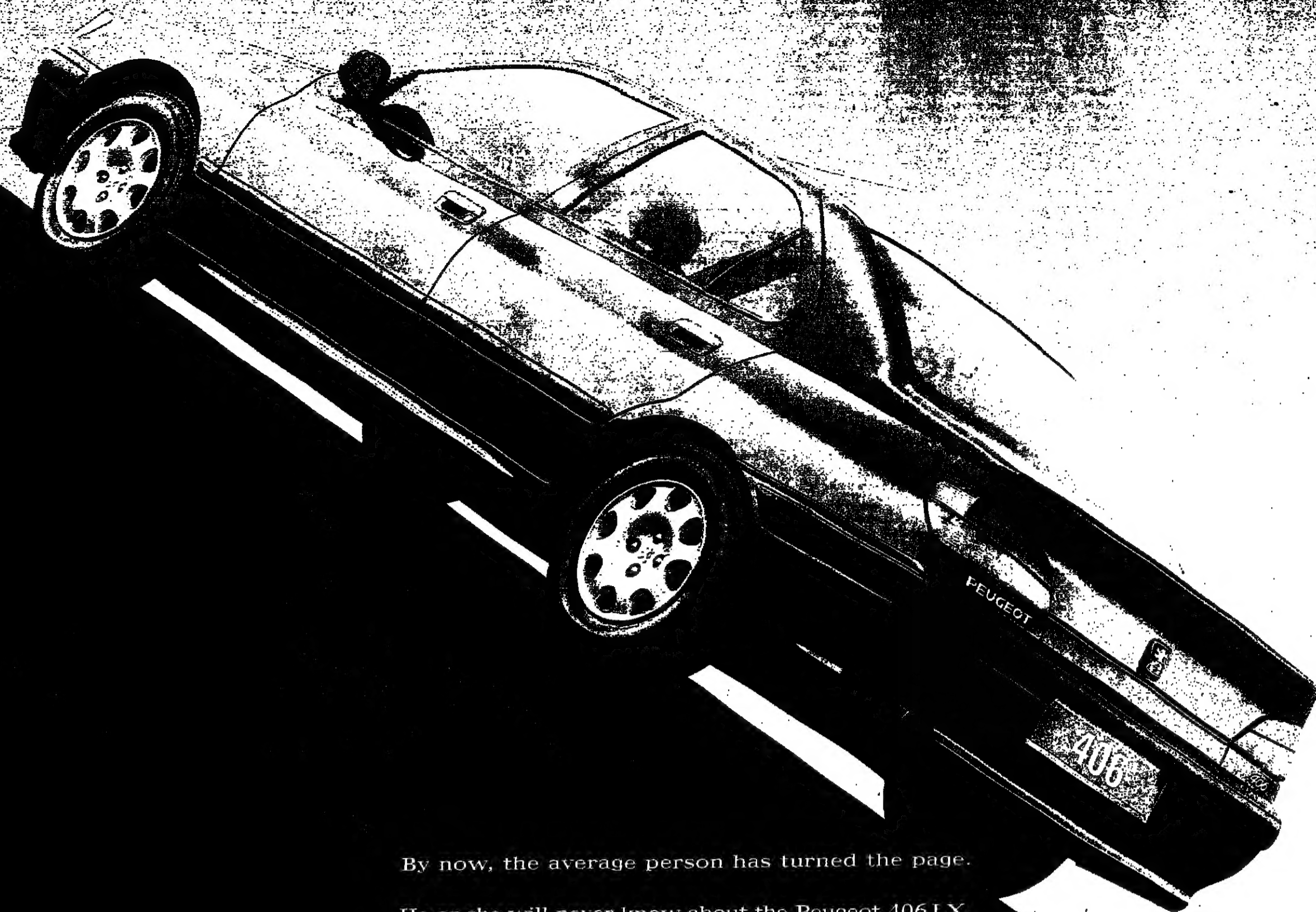
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# Blair to launch publicity blitz in battle for wavering voters

BY JILL SHERMAN  
CHIEF POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR will mount an unprecedented campaign to sell Labour's manifesto programme to the voters over the next few weeks.

The draft manifesto, to be put to a ballot of Labour's 376,000 members in the autumn, will be published on July 4 amid a publicity blitz to advertise the party's "new contract with the people".

Labour will also distribute a new tabloid newspaper to hundreds of thousands of selected households in an effort to convince voters that it has a set of radical policies. Mr Blair wants to persuade non-members and potential party switchers that Labour has changed but will still offer something different from the Major Government.

The high-profile campaign is designed to counter accusations that Labour has few ideas and that those that it does have are similar to the Tories.

Mr Blair and Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, are working against the clock to finish the glossy document that will enshrine Labour's main policy commitments for a first parliamentary term. Senior policy advisers have been working on the document since the end of March, when Mr Blair announced that he would launch the biggest ever consultation project on his plans for government — the Road to the Manifesto.

Previous policy papers and speeches have been edited so that their core elements can be incorporated into the manifesto paper to be presented as a "contract with the people". But Mr Blair is said to be keen to

sharpen the document further and Shadow Cabinet members are still arguing about what it should contain.

The paper, which will have an introduction by Mr Blair, will have fewer than 40 pages. It will not contain Labour's main tax plans, which will be spelled out nearer the general election, Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, has ensured that most policies have been stripped of spending pledges.

The only references to spending are expected to be a commitment to a windfall tax on privatised utilities, to fund jobs and training schemes for young people; a pledge to reallocate £60 million from the assisted places scheme to reduce class sizes in infant schools; and Mr Brown's plan to scrap child benefit for 16 to 18-year-olds, raising £600 million to help youths from poorer families to stay at school or college.

The paper will make clear that Labour has abandoned many of the policies in its 1992 manifesto, such as the commitments to increase pensions by £5 a week and raise child benefit. Labour will no longer impose a compulsory training levy on employers. It will not call for the renationalisation of privatised utilities, and is likely to take a softer line on the renationalisation of British Rail. It will also abandon the commitment to cut defence spending and will soften plans for the proposed Scottish assembly to have tax-raising powers.

Over the next two weeks the leadership will rush out some of Labour's most controversial policies in a series of documents and speeches. These will include plans to overhaul the state pension system and a programme to get people off

benefit and into work. There will also be revised policies on health, foreign policy and the labour market.

Labour will stick to its position on a single currency — it supports monetary union but only under if certain economic criteria are met. It will also guarantee to consult the people either through a referendum or a general election.

The three policies still being drafted are on welfare-to-work, including measures to reduce means testing and to encourage single mothers to take jobs; on softening opposition to the National Health Service reforms; and on trade unions.

The education and employment team is finalising a document setting out trade union and workers' rights. Many of Labour's pledges are expected to be dropped although no decisions have yet been reached. The team's paper will reaffirm Labour's commitment to a minimum wage while refusing to set a figure. But it is expected to fall short of John Smith's promise to introduce full employment

rights for all workers, including part-timers, from the day they start work.

The manifesto document, which will go to the party conference for ratification in October, will be split into four main headings.

□ **Opportunity economy:** including Labour's plans for lifelong learning, welfare reforms and sound finance

□ **One Nation society:** health, safe communities, environment and education

□ **New politics:** decentralisation, local government, citizens rights and Ireland

□ **Leadership in the world:** Europe, defence and foreign affairs.

The Shadow Cabinet will ratify the document the week before it goes before the National Executive Committee on July 2, two days before its publication.

Mr Blair will emphasise the need to take tough choices and will make clear that some Shadow ministers will not be able to press ahead with plans they regard as vital as soon as they might like. The document is likely to include, however, some proposals that have only

recently been floated, such as Jack Straw's plan to introduce curfews for children under ten.

In the introduction, Mr Blair will argue that the nation's renewal depends on stakeholding "where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and a responsibility to participate".

To coincide with the launch, Labour will have a party political broadcast and distribute thousands of leaflets highlighting five key pledges. These are expected to be simple phrases such as "Labour will introduce smaller classes for school children" or "Labour will guarantee every youth between 18 to 25 a job or a training place".

The launch will be followed by a national tour by Tony Blair and Shadow Cabinet members, who will put the party's message across as they did for the Clause Four roadshow. If the document is ratified by the party conference it will be put to a ballot of all party members in the autumn. The trade unions are also expected to ballot most of their 4.5 million members.



Tony Blair: seeking to counter accusations that new Labour has few original ideas

## Labour shifts policy on lottery profits

BY ARTHUR LEATHLEY, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR watered down yesterday its past demands for the National Lottery operator to be barred from making a profit, suggesting that a cap on earnings might be introduced instead.

Jack Cunningham, Shadow National Heritage Secretary, gave a clear warning that in government Labour would curb the profits of the operator when the lottery licence was renewed in 2001. But he backed away from previous suggestions that the licence would go to a non-profit-making organisation.

In a speech to a business seminar in London, Mr Cunningham said that a limit on profits, along the lines proposed by Labour for the

privatised utilities, was an alternative to barring profits altogether. Camelot, the present lottery operator, welcomed the apparent shift, with senior figures suggesting that Labour had recognised the difficulties in its original plan.

Mr Cunningham criticised the gains made by Camelot but made clear there would be no change to the rules in advance of a new licence being awarded.

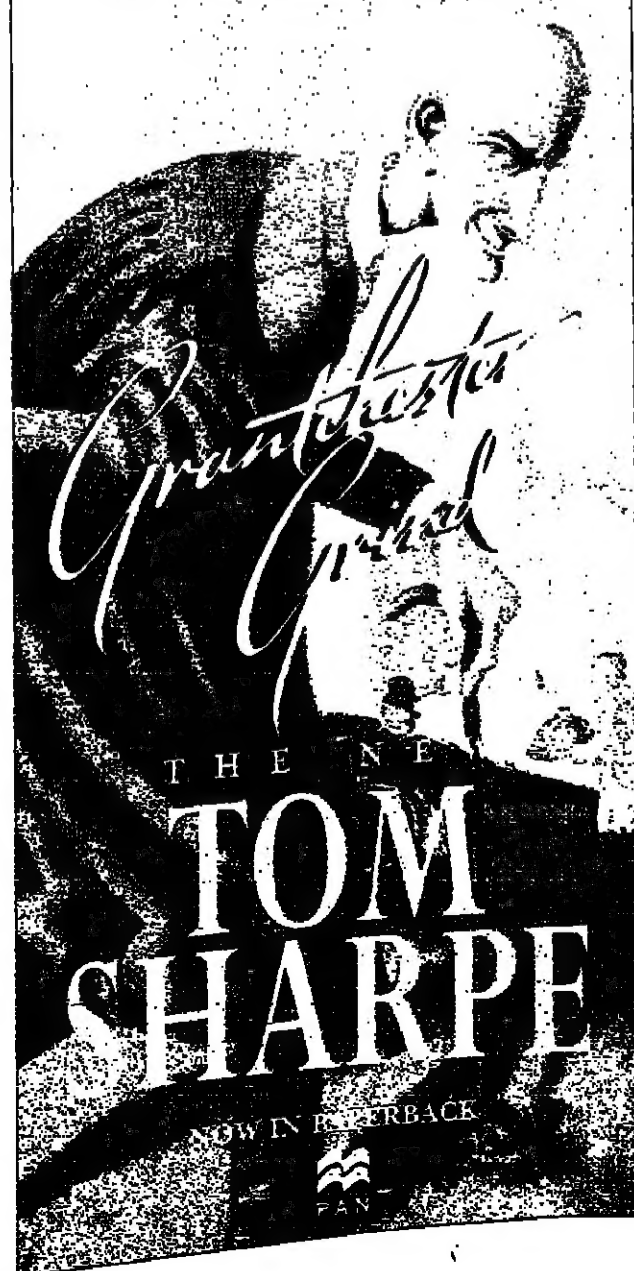
### IN PARLIAMENT

TODAY the Commons is not sitting. In the Lords: Commonwealth Development Corporation Bill, second reading; Abolition Bill, Commons amendment; Energy Conservation Bill, second reading; Noise Bill, committee; Sexual Offences (Conspiracy and Incitement) Bill, second reading; Debate on sale of former RAF base at Snettisham, Suffolk.

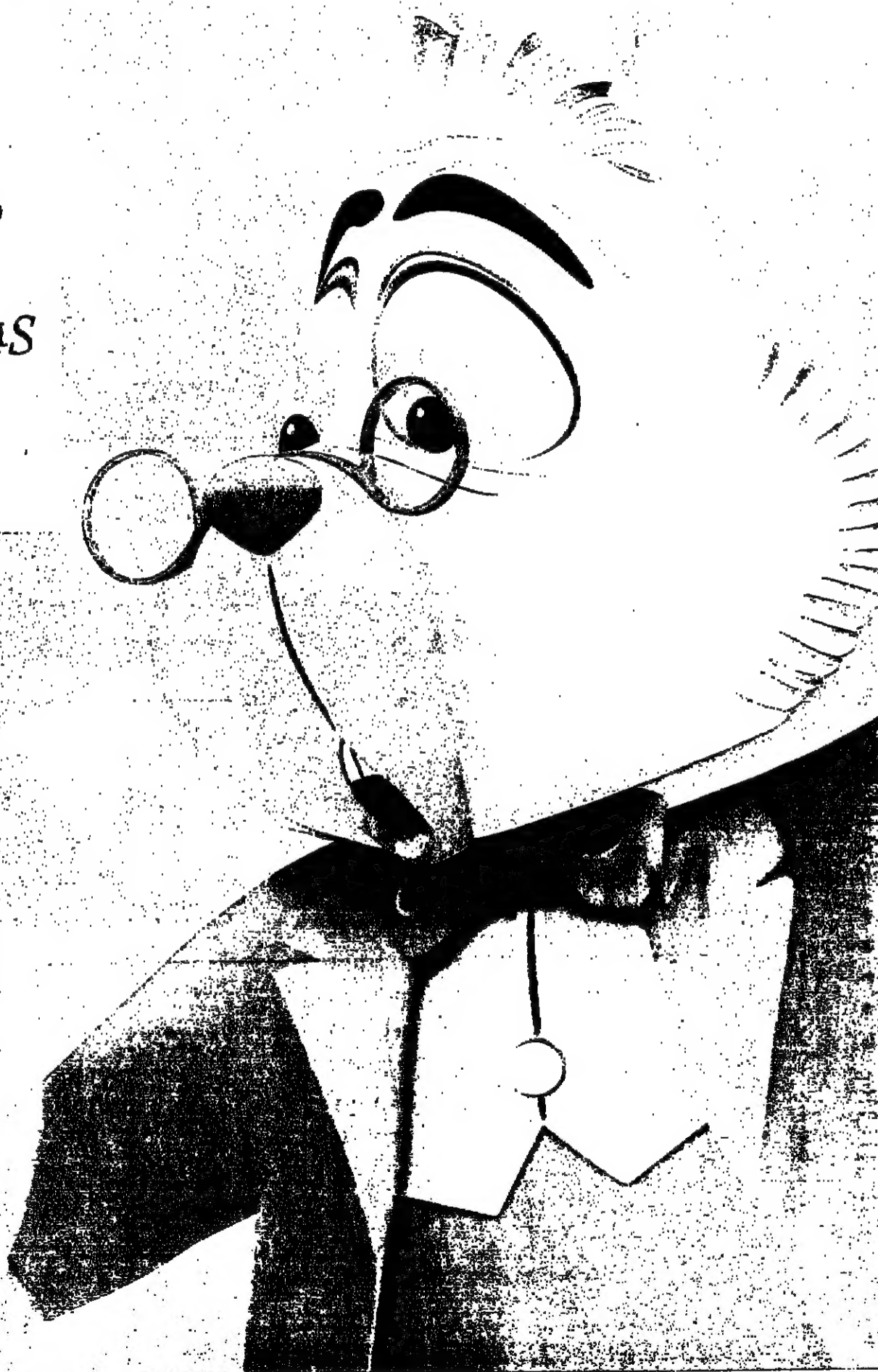
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Evidence of harm from even a single dose is indisputable in animal experiments, say professors

## Highs are not worth the lows says survivor

BY CAROL MIDDLEY

JULIAN MADIGAN was 16 years old when he and a friend first "netted" half an Ecstasy "tab" each in a nightclub. That evening, utterly euphoric and bursting with energy, they danced through the night convinced they had found the perfect buzz.

Within three years, he was taking up to ten tablets every weekend, condemning himself to three days of absolute depression each week. The black moods, where he could not be bothered to speak to anybody, were caused by the lack of serotonin in the brain, which experts fear could lead to psychiatric problems.

Users become so accustomed to the artificial happiness the drug brings that ordinary life seems too bleak to contemplate. Mr Madigan, now 20, said: "I would neck my last tab of the weekend on Sunday afternoon. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays were a complete low. I was so depressed, I couldn't even remember them. I would just mope around the house not communicating with anyone. I had no interest in what was happening around me. My parents were like strangers."

"All I could think of was getting round to Thursday, when I would take my first one of the weekend. Then I would love everyone and was

the life and soul of the party."

Mr Madigan, who is now off the drug, said he and his friends were aware of the warnings about brain damage. "I knew you only have a certain limited amount of serotonin, but when you are young, off your head and happy, you don't care. The high you get is brilliant and you think you can live forever."

"There was a chap who lived down the road from us in Dublin who was taking the pills for two years. He decided he needed help, so he contacted counsellors. But one day his mother came home and found he had hanged himself. The verdict at the inquest just said death by misadventure, but it was directly caused by Ecstasy. It scared me."

"I began dealing to feed my own habit, and got beaten up by some other dealers. When my dad saw my battered face, he'd had enough and got me to a counsellor. Now I am happy that when I wake up, I don't have a drug craving."

Mr Madigan has written a book about his ordeal, *The Agony of Ecstasy*. He hopes to represent Ireland in the 100 metres at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, but he still does not know how much he damaged his brain or vital organs in three years' regular use. He is soon to have a full medical to



Julian Madigan with his father Gerry: "I have had to relearn how to feel love"

secure life assurance which will include a scan of his liver, kidney and brain. The prospect frightens him.

He said: "Ecstasy obscures all your real emotions and gives you artificial ones. I have had to relearn how to feel love. It has taken a long time."

Dr Philip Maguire, of the Institute of Psychiatry in London, is treating hospital patients who are users of Ecstasy. He believes the long-term risk to mental health is

more alarming than the death rate, because of the numbers of people taking it, but it was impossible to prove that the drug was the direct cause.

"In the late 1980s people started showing up at hospitals asking for treatment and it became apparent they had taken lots of Ecstasy," he said.

Paul Betts, whose daughter Leah died after taking an Ecstasy tablet on her 18th birthday last year, said he had been trying to stress the risk of brain damage in lectures on

the drug. Mr Betts, from Letchingdon, Essex, said: "There are three young people I know, aged 17, 19 and 23, who were regular users, taking up to nine tablets in a weekend, and are now in psychiatric care. If you think about it, the thousands of young people taking Ecstasy now are this country's future doctors, teachers and MPs. If they are going to be suffering depression in later years at such a large scale, we are in trouble."

## Ecstasy use likely to cause long-term damage to brain

BY JEREMY LAURANCE, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

### ECSTASY

Ecstasy — or E — has rapidly gained popularity as the drug of the rave culture. In the late 1980s young people were paying £20 a tablet but the cost has steadily dropped to as little as £5. Many young girls spurn alcohol in favour of a drug which they believe is less harmful to their liver and has no calories. Researchers have found children as young as 12 taking the drug and "couch-potato" usage is reported, with children too young to get into nightclubs taking it at home.

are worrying signs of similar damage in humans. A study of 30 regular users of Ecstasy found that they had lower levels of serotonin in their cerebro-spinal fluid.

Writing in the *British Medical Journal*, the professors say that because of the role of serotonin in controlling mood, regular use of Ecstasy "might be expected to lead to psychiatric abnormalities". Users have been reported to have suffered mental breakdowns, they say.

"What is a great concern is the possibility that problems such as major depression will appear only in several years' time."

A study in Sheffield showed that a single dose of Ecstasy equivalent to that taken by a human caused considerable degeneration in the brains of rats. Although some repair may occur, an American study of squirrel monkeys showed that damaged neurones grew back abnormally.

the serotonin receptors in the brain. Serotonin is a brain chemical which plays an important role in regulating mood and researchers believe that damage to the receptors will result in chronic depression in later life.

Professor Green said: "The damage has been shown in so many species there is no doubt about it. It is not just seen with high doses. You can use low doses and still get it." There

## Labels on 'Scottish' salmon may tell a fishy tale

### WEEKEND SHOPPING

SCOTTISH salmon can be a red herring, according to the Consumers' Association. Most customers do not realise that when they buy "Scottish" smoked salmon it is quite likely to be Norwegian and could come from anywhere in the world.

The two quality assurance schemes for Scottish smoked salmon do not guarantee Scottish origin, the association says. Only products labelled "Smoked Scottish salmon" or "Scottish salmon smoked in Scotland" must have been fished or farmed in Scotland.

Promotions include: Asda: boneless pork leg joint

£3.49 per kg, Chinese leaf 49p a head, melons 89p each, mangoes 49p each. Budegens: premium pork sausages £1.29 for 454g, Davidstow mature cheddar £1.99 a lb, Braeburn apples 59p a lb. Co-op: turkey breast steaks £3.29 for four, garlic ciabatta 99p for 230g, thin pork and beef sausages 55p for 227g. Harrods: fresh swordfish steaks £1.82 for 100g, fresh tuna steaks £1.43 for 100g. Iceland: chicken tikka with peanut sauce £1.19 for six,

Chinese bites £1.59 for 195g, trout £2.99 for 800g, garden peas £1.79 for 1.8kg. Marks & Spencer: English strawberries £1.99 for 300g, fresh whipped cream 75p for 190g, tarte au citron £2.75. Morrisons: garlic bread 99p for two, Ski extra-fruit yoghurt 95p for four, Yoplait petit filous 89p for six. Sainsbury: beef rump £7.49 per kg, skinless chicken breast fillets £4.39 for 567g, red peppers 89p a lb, strawberries £1.49 for 227g. Sainsbury's: boneless chicken

breasts £3.95 for 454g, large whole trout £4.16 kg, red peppers 99p lb. Sainsbury's: beef topside/silver-side/rump with added basting fat £4.36 per kg, fresh smoked haddock fillet £1.69 a lb, baking potatoes 29p a lb. Tesco: rump steak £7.59 a kg, new-season half shoulder lamb £3.63 per kg, boneless shoulder of pork £2.79 per kg, haddock fillets £1.98 a lb. Waitrose: Aberdeen Angus beefburgers 69p for 170g, salmon steaks £2.49 for 270g, large dressed Cromer crabs £2.49 each.

ROBIN YOUNG

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in my sermon next Sunday, the subject  
of which is "Doubting Thomas. Does  
he still exist today?"

Yours faithfully,

The Rev Michael Wells.



RECEIVED

# Falling Child

By Jeremy Paxton  
and Dominic Keating

CHILDREN'S lives are being threatened by a new epidemic of child abuse, say two leading experts. The experts, who are also authors of a new book, say that the incidence of child abuse has risen sharply in recent years, and that the government's current policies are inadequate to deal with the problem. They call for a major review of child protection laws and procedures.

## British

By Michael H. R...

FOUR hundred women made to retire in 1979 received £5.4 million yesterday. The sum was a ten-year legal battle, and was paid by the public service union. The women, who were ranging from 55 to 65, were leaving salary...

Rodney, Bishop of... general secretary

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Falling birth rate will lead to first drop in Britain's population, family study says

# Childlessness rises as women put work first

By JEREMY LAURANCE  
AND DOMINIC KENNEDY

CHILDLESSNESS will double in Britain as more women leave it too late to start a family, according to a government forecast.

One in five women now in their late 20s and early 30s will never have a child, it predicts — twice as many as the generation now in their early 50s. The falling birth rate, if sustained, will also mean that the population of Britain will drop for the first time since records began.

The forecast, in *Population Trends*, published by the Office of National Statistics, shows that the proportion of women in England and Wales who were childless at 45 rose to 13 per cent in 1994 from 10 per cent in 1989. On current trends, it will rise to 20 per cent within 15 to 20 years.

The rise in childlessness reflects a trend among women towards having children at a later age and putting careers before family. Birth rates have risen sharply among women in their 30s and fallen among those in their 20s. But, because fertility declines with age, an increasing proportion of women are finding they have left it too late to have children.

Fiona McAllister, of the Family Policy Studies Unit, who is heading a research project on childlessness, said that money and education influenced women's decisions about having children. "Studies show that childless women tend to be better educated ... Women with O levels were twice as likely to say they did not intend to have children as those with no qualifications."

The average number of children born to each woman



Prams on parade: nannies line up in Hyde Park in 1937. The average number of children born to women peaked at three in the 1960s, but has now fallen to a low of 1.8

has fallen from a peak of three in the 1960s to 1.8 in 1994. The fertility rate has been below the level of 2.1 necessary to replace the population for the past 20 years.

Although there was a blip in the population figures in 1983, that fall was not sustained. Births are still exceeding deaths because the "baby boom" generation of the 1960s is just coming to its maximum child-producing age, but statisticians expect deaths to exceed births by 2020. The last time deaths outnumbered births was probably after the Great Plague in 1665.

Bob Armitage, of the ONS fertility unit, said: "We are

likely to have a population which is more heavily weighted towards the elderly and with too few workers in it." Immigration was unlikely to fill the gap, he said.

British women are following a European trend, led by Italy and Spain, which at 1.2 children per woman, have the world's smallest families. Irish women have an average of 2 children, the French 1.7, Russians 1.4 and Germans 1.3. Many European countries are now managing by choice what the Chinese have to impose on their citizens: the one-child family.

"Nobody loves children more than the Italians," said

Pat Murray of the pressure group Population Concern, "but they are having smaller families and trying to do the very best for them."

Family planning services and equal opportunities in the workplace have given British women the freedom to make their own choices. Childless role models from an earlier generation include Betty Boothroyd, 66, the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons, and Baroness Castle, 85, the former Social Services Secretary.

"There are obviously a lot of women who are deciding that they want another role in life," said Ms Murray.

## Guernsey makes abortion legal

By PHILIP JEUNE

GUERNSEY'S parliament voted by a two-thirds majority yesterday to legalise abortion before the twelfth week of pregnancy, provided that two doctors approve.

The decision, after two days of emotional debate, ends an 86-year-old law that makes abortion punishable by life imprisonment. About 400 women from the Channel Islands travel to Britain each year for abortions.

The 57 members of the

Guernsey parliament had been heavily lobbied by pro-life campaigners claiming that four million abortions had taken place in Britain since Sir David Steel's Abortion Bill became law in 1967.

During the debate one deputy, John Langlois, likened abortion to the Holocaust, saying that "the termination of a pregnancy is the parents' Final Solution". Pro-abortionists condemned the comparison.

Councillor Sue Plant, the president of Guernsey's

Board of Health, said she was pleased that her colleagues had accepted her committee's proposals. "They have debated the issue as sensitively and responsibly as they could. They've had incredible heart-searching."

The Channel Islands remain the last area of the British Isles where abortion is illegal. Jersey approved legislation — by just one vote — in principle two years ago. The new law is due to return to Jersey's parliament for ratification in a few weeks.

## Canadian attacks 'colonial' bishops

By RUTH GLEDHILL

THE Archbishop who heads the Anglican Church in Canada is to attack the Church of England's bishops today for adopting an 18th-century "colonial" attitude towards the American Church over issues such as homosexual priests.

Archbishop Michael Peers, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, warns of "an English attempt to demonise the American Church". Writing in *The Church of England Newspaper*, he defends his Church against accusations that it is failing to uphold traditional teaching on homosexuality.

His attack comes in response to a warning from an English bishop that the American Church, where a bishop was recently cleared of a heresy charge after he knowingly ordained a homosexual, should uphold traditional teachings. Archbishop Peers says: "It sounds like the England we have known since colonial days, telling us what we must say and how we must say it." Some bishops will no longer accept "the same English condescension and scolding to which we are long since accustomed," he states.

"The phenomenon of people in English palaces issuing warnings to other people across the Atlantic about positions they must hold, as well as about the consequences of failure to do so, sound like the madness of King George III," he says.

His heated letter brings into the open the cross-Atlantic battle over the ordination of homosexuals, which seems set to dominate the 1998 Lambeth conference, the ten-yearly meeting of the worldwide bishops of the Anglican communion.

It follows the decision by an American church court to clear the Right Rev Walter Righter, a retired Anglican bishop, of a heresy charge for knowingly ordaining a homosexual. In the wake of his acquittal, England's Bishop of Rochester, the Right Rev Michael Nazir-Ali, issued a public warning to the American Church, arguing that the Church's teaching needs to be embodied in the lives of those who hold office in the Church.

## British Gas women win £8m after being forced to retire at 60

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

FOUR hundred women who were made to retire at 60 by British Gas received £8.4 million compensation yesterday. The settlement followed a ten-year legal battle with the company and was negotiated by the public service union Unison. It will provide individuals with amounts ranging from £1,000 to £59,000, depending on length of service and leaving salary.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, the union's general secretary, said: "None of

these women wanted to retire at 60. They were all fit and well and capable of giving so much more to the industry."

The agreement followed a test case in the European Court of Justice in 1990: it took six years to trace former employees and negotiate compensation. The court ruled that British Gas, which retires men at 65, was "an emanation of the state" while a nationalised industry and was therefore bound by the European equal treatment directive. Unison said it remained uncertain

how the ruling would affect other privatised industries.

Mr Bickerstaffe said the women were doubly discriminated against, losing five years' pay and having a smaller pension than if they had been allowed to stay at work, like men, until 65.

Bruce Piper, the union's director of legal services, said: "The legal process has taken a long time. We took the case right through the British legal system, including the House of Lords, which referred it to the European Court of Justice. Their

decision was much better than envisaged."

A condition of the settlement is that none of the women is allowed to say how much she has been given. Among those receiving compensation was Joyce Walters-Girout, 72, from London, who worked for British Gas's marketing services in the North Thames region. Mrs Walters-Girout, who was forced to retire in 1984, said: "At the time I was putting my daughter through university. My husband had died when my daughter was three years

old. It was a struggle for me to carry on contributing towards my daughter's education."

"I was very healthy and I was not ready to retire. The money I have received will help make life more comfortable for me."

Pat Turner, 78, from Solihull, West Midlands, was compulsorily retired in 1978 from her job in customer accounts. She said: "I did not want to retire. I asked to be put on a list to do part-time or casual work which sometimes came up during holiday periods, but even

that was denied to me because of my age. This money will help pay for a richly deserved holiday and to augment my pension."

British Gas, which has dropped its policy of retiring women at 60, said: "This settlement, involving former female clerical staff of the pre-privatised British Gas Corporation, is a legacy from the past."

"The settlement provides graduated compensation based on lost salary and benefits, injury to feelings and interest depending on the date the claims were presented."



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# First Lady blamed by Whitewater senators for lost papers

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

HILLARY CLINTON was catapulted to the heart of Whitewater again yesterday with fresh Republican evidence that she was the only suspect in the disappearance and sudden discovery of her own legal billing records.

The accounts of her legal work for Madison Guaranty, the corrupt Arkansas bank at the centre of the Whitewater affair, were subpoenaed in early 1994, but only surfaced last August after a Clinton aide discovered them in the guest quarters next to her White House private office.

Mrs Clinton, who appeared before a grand jury in Washington earlier this year to answer questions about the movements of these documents, has denied any knowledge of their presence in the White House. The Senate Whitewater committee, chaired by Alfonse D'Amato, the New York senator, will issue its final report on Tuesday and is expected to say that the First Lady was responsible for concealing the records for up to two years.

"The report will indicate that Hillary Rodham Clinton left the records in the book

room," the committee's investigators were quoted as saying by the *New York Daily News* yesterday. "It's not reasonable to think that anybody else left them there."

The committee questioned more than 300 people and used FBI forensic specialists to examine the notes, released by the White House in January. Sets of fingerprints found on the papers included those of Mrs Clinton. The White House said she had probably handled them when her office at the Rose Law Firm in Arkansas was being cleared during the 1992 campaign.

Mark Fabiani, the White House spokesman on Whitewater, rejected the latest attacks, claiming that the committee was desperate to undermine Mrs Clinton. "As the First Lady testified and has said publicly, she does not know how the records came to be discovered in the book room at the White House," he said. "Even though the First Lady offered to answer questions in writing last February, the committee never chose to ask her a single question."

Mrs Clinton has stated under oath that she did minimal work for Madison, but the 166 pages of billing records show she had at least 14 meetings or conversations with an executive about a deal that lost the bank \$3 million (£1.96 million).

It is clear the Whitewater committee has found her the most vulnerable target for its inquiries. It has already said it is seeking perjury charges against Margaret Williams, her chief of staff; Susan Thomas, her most trusted confidante; and Harold Ickes, the deputy White House chief of staff, who is especially close to Mrs Clinton.



D'Amato: committee due to report on Tuesday

## Churches burn while spirit of the Klan rides again

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER  
IN BOLIGEE, ALABAMA

BOLIGEE is so tiny it is on the map only because there is nowhere bigger in this remote and impoverished corner of western Alabama. It has 278 inhabitants, a dilapidated café, a post office, a general store, one traffic light and churches—churches galore—but three less than it had six months ago.

The Mount Zion Baptist church, which stood in a lonely forest clearing off a tiny backroad three miles west of town, burnt to the ground the night of December 22.

On the evening of January 11 Little Zion, another black church which had crowned a wooded hilltop south of Boligee for a century, went up in flames. That same night Mount Zion, which stood on old plantation land east of Boligee, was destroyed by fire.

No clues were found, no arrests have been made, but no one doubts the fires were arson. Yesterday another black church, this time in Enid, Oklahoma, was destroyed in a suspected arson attack, and last Monday the Rev Willie Coleman's Rising Star Baptist church was burnt to the ground in Greensboro, Alabama.

Over the past 18 months, 33 black churches have been torched in Southern states in a chilling echo of the civil rights era when Ku Klux Klan "night riders" destroyed more than 100 churches in neighbouring Mississippi alone.

What divides Boligee is the question of who set the three fires. Some locals expediently blame the white "redneck" deer hunters who pour into the densely wooded area each winter, but the three churches were so scattered and remote it would have been almost impossible for an outsider to have found them.

Boligee, which is 85 per cent black, still practises de facto segregation. White children go to a private school, blacks to the public school. Whites meet mostly at the café, blacks



Leroy Smith, left, and Matthew Williams sift through the rubble of the Little Zion Church near the tiny settlement of Boligee, Alabama

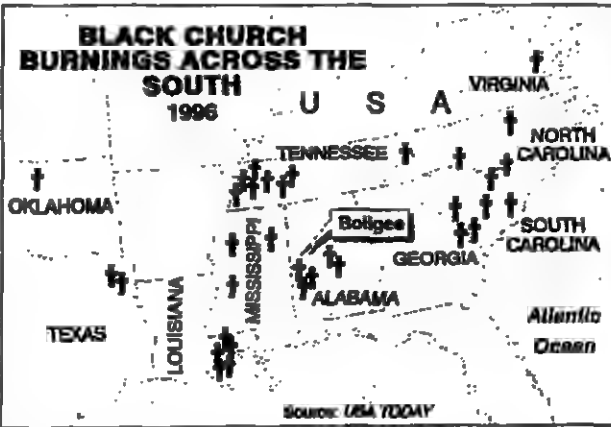
at the shop. Buddy Lavender, a 68-year-old catfish farmer who serves as Boligee's Mayor, policeman and fire chief, says he knows many fine blacks, but candidly admits they "don't come over to eat supper". Above all, the two races worship separately.

There are 98 black churches in the surrounding county, which has a population of just 10,000 and is one of America's poorest. Most were established before blacks had cars or when they were slaves.

They are simple structures tucked away down back roads with tiny congregations and part-time pastors, but they remain the anchors of Southern black life and potent symbols of black independence.

The arsons "are attacks on the black community", insists Barrow Lankster, the black district attorney. "My belief is that they are racially and hate motivated."

To judge by the dingy office of Spiver Gordon, a local veteran of the civil rights struggle who marched with Martin Luther King, most of America agrees. His desk was



littered on Wednesday with three- and four-figure cheques from well-wishers across the country who, thanks to the recent publicity, have contributed more than \$100,000 (£65,000) to rebuild the churches.

On the day President Clinton was visiting a burnt South Carolina church, Mr Gordon was deluged with interview requests from the national media.

Outside, patiently waiting to see him, were representatives of the Quaker and Men-

nonite churches who are sending hundreds of white volunteers to Boligee this summer to help with the rebuilding.

"It's a response by the people of God to the suffering of God's people," said Harold Confer, the Quaker representative. "Everyone's place of worship is diminished by church burnings or desecrations, wherever they occur."

Only local whites, Mr Lavender included, challenge the conventional wisdom. They suggest the nation has been



Rev Willie Coleman

hoodwinked and insinuate the blacks themselves may have burnt their churches.

On Wednesday afternoon the bearded, bespectacled Mayor left his catfish and crawfish ponds to give a private tour of Boligee in a pick-up truck equipped with a semi-automatic rifle, a pump-action sawn-off shotgun and a .38 pistol.

He labelled some black youths outside the store crack dealers. He dubbed a public housing complex the "lucubator" because young black girls

on welfare "made babies" there. He suggested the officials of some black churches dealt in drugs and bootlegged whisky.

He could not or would not say whether the Klan still existed locally, but bluntly asserted that "the white male is the most discriminated against person in Alabama".

Mr Lavender would not, as Mayor, directly accuse the blacks of torching their churches but steered us towards Pamela Montgomery, white founder of a bi-racial citizens' pressure group.

She called the burnings a "huge smokescreen" and suggested the blacks who now monopolised the county government had ordered the fires to divert the attention of federal investigators from their corruption.

This white anger and suspicion may or may not be justified, but it could conceivably have driven a white to burn the churches. Just one thing is certain. Next month's Atlanta Olympics will showcase the "New South" to the world, but the Old South is not dead yet.

## Baptists boycott Disney over tolerance of gays

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

BAPTISTS in the United States have voted to boycott the Walt Disney group, its toys, films and theme parks, unless it stops supporting homosexuals and "disparaging" the Christian values it once so solidly represented.

The Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, voted strongly in favour of action against Disney, which has recently lost its good standing among many "Bible Belting" Christians. Disney reacted angrily, describing the move as "curious".

The 13,000 members of the convention, representing 16 million Southern Baptists, criticised the company for extending benefits to homosexual employees' compa-

nies. It also objected to Disney releasing violent and sexually explicit films via one of its subsidiaries, Miramax, which is among the canniest, most competitive of film distribution companies.

The Baptists singled out a British-made Miramax film, *Priest*, which featured a Roman Catholic priest who comes out as a homosexual. *Priest*, starring Linus Roache and Cathy Tyson and directed by Antonia Bird, was a 1995 hit on the film festival circuit. Miramax also distributed *Kids*, which looked at adolescent sex, and a Disney publishing subsidiary produced the book *Growing Up Gay: From Left Out to Coming Out*.

The convention motion called on Baptists to "boycott Disney Company stores and theme parks if they continue this anti-Christian and anti-family trend". Nancy Victory, the head of the resolutions committee, said: "The Disney Company is not the same Disney that it was when we were growing up. We find there is a philosophical shift at the highest levels of the company which is not friendly to families and people of faith."

The resolution also attacked "gay days" held at Disney World at which homosexuals gather, usually in late June, for a day of fellowship. "In recent years the Disney Company has given the appearance that the promotion of homosexuality is more important than its historic commitment to traditional family values," said the Baptists.

The Rev Richard Land questioned Disney's interpretation of "family". He said: "Are we going to hear next that Mickey has left Minnie for Donald? That would be goofy."

Disney said: "We find it curious that a group that claims to espouse family values would vote to boycott the world's largest producer of wholesome family entertainment." Disney said it would not rescind the benefits extended to employees' gay partners. The company probably realises it might open itself to legal action if it tried to do so.

The company added: "We question any group that demands that we deprive people of health benefits, and we know of no tourist destination in the world that denies admission to people as the Baptists are insisting we do."

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# Zyuganov defies prophets to claim victory

FROM RICHARD BEESTON  
IN MOSCOW

GENNADI ZYUGANOV, the Russian Communist Party leader and main challenger for the country's presidency, said confidently yesterday that victory in Sunday's polls already belonged to him.

Speaking at his last press conference before polling day, the thick-set former teacher predicted the end of political and economic reform in Russia and suggested that President Yeltsin should have retired quietly to the country when he still had the chance.

"Mr Yeltsin claims that his rating has grown from 6 to 50 per cent. Only bamboo in the tropics grows at such a rate," Mr Zyuganov said in a flash of humour rare in a man known best for his solid but unimaginative leadership style.

"We are confidently going to the polls, and I can say that we have won because the latest opinion polls say that two-thirds of the country's citizens support the ideals of popular patriotism and social justice," he said.

Despite his public display of confidence, many senior Communist figures have already concluded privately that they are in for a much closer contest against an opponent whose popularity is visibly rising every day.

President Yeltsin, who travelled to St Petersburg yesterday and who wraps up his campaign with a final visit to the Yekaterinburg area today, has outlasted his Communist opponent in just about every aspect of the race for the presidency.

Nevertheless, Mr Zyuganov, 51, a classic middle-ranking party apparatchik



who helped to rebuild the Communist Party after its near-collapse five years ago, has doggedly stood his ground and maintained a solid support base among voters across the country.

Yesterday he renewed his attack on the Kremlin administration, criticising President Yeltsin for destroying the Soviet Union, ruining Russian industry and the country's scientific base, failing to crack down on crime and corruption, and causing the bloody war in Chechnya.

Although few Russians would argue with the criticisms, they have also failed to hear from Mr Zyuganov the specific ways in which he plans to cure the country's ills and what sort of government he would establish in Moscow if he came to power.

One journalist estimated recently that, if Mr Zyuganov's promises of renewed government funding to industry, agriculture, education, health care and social services were added up, the final sum would come to between five and seven times the present national budget.

Although Mr Zyuganov caused a sensation earlier this year at the Davos economic conference when he assured Western bankers that he was at heart a social democrat who

favoured a mixed economy, his assurances failed to ease concerns in the business community.

"Zyuganov has never offered any specifics of what exactly he plans to do if he comes to power," one Western banker in Moscow said. "It is not clear that the Communists understand how modern economies function. By accident or design, they could set this country back years."

Part of Mr Zyuganov's inability to be more specific about his vision for a future Russia is that the Communist Party today is just one part of a 200-group alliance of leftwingers, nationalists and social democrats brought together by opposition to President Yeltsin but representing a wide array of ideologies.

The coalition, known as the "Red-Brown" alliance because of its Communist and nationalist roots, worked well for Mr Zyuganov in last December's parliamentary elections. He and his allies secured a third of the vote in the Duma, the lower house of parliament, and went on to dominate the legislature.

At the time, the Communists looked unstoppable, but they have failed to build on their victory and in particular to appeal to the one-third of undecided voters who will determine the presidential election.

Viktor Linnik, the former editor of *Pravda*, the official Communist newspaper, said that the failure of the Communists to build on their victory made them look "like children who come to the Christmas tree to find that their gifts have been stolen".

He added: "Zyuganov's tactic in the campaign has been to



Zyuganov, in Moscow yesterday, addresses his last press conference before Russia goes to the polls

bank on the substantial anti-Yeltsin vote, which he exploited to the fullest. But he proved weak on the positive signs which finally limited his voter appeal."

For the Communist Party leader the result of the presidential election could well

decide his fate as well as that of his cherished party, which he has served loyally since his youth in the southern region of Orel.

It is widely expected that, if the Communists lose the election, the alliance they have so carefully put together will

crumble. The party itself, which is made up largely of elderly Soviet-era supporters, may never have another chance to regain power by the ballot box.

Next time round, at the turn of the century, the ranks of the disgruntled and nostalgic el-

derly voters will have thinned and the strongly anti-Communist youth will have won the demographic battle and may well have laid to rest once and for all the country's Communist legacy.

Leading article, page 21

## Historic vote for president spans 11 time zones

## FACTFILE

ON Sunday, 107 million Russians across 11 time zones will be eligible to vote for the first time in the country's history for a president serving a four-year term.

□ Voting: some Russians living in remote regions of the Arctic Circle or serving in Russian naval vessels have voted already. Others can vote between 8am and 10pm at one of the 93,000 polling stations.

□ Results: each polling station passes its results to its territorial election commission, which then passes on regional totals to the Central Election Commission in Moscow. The CEC must complete its count within 15 days. Results must then be announced within three days of a total being reached.

□ Observers: they will be designated by candidates, as well as by Russian and international organisations. More than 1,100 foreign observers are expected. The Communist Party is expected to mobilise a further 93,000. They can witness every stage of voting, accompany mobile ballot boxes, look at voter lists and appeal against the actions of election commissions.

□ Winning: to win in the first round, a candidate must get 50 per cent plus one of the votes cast. Failing that, a second round will follow between the two most popular candidates.

□ Transition of power: a new Bill on the transition of power to a president-elect stipulates that the incumbent president must stand down 30 days after the CEC has announced the election results.

□ The candidates: Boris Yeltsin, 65, President; Gennadi Zyuganov, 51, Communist; Grigori Yavlinsky, 44, Yabloko; Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, 51, Liberal Democratic Party; Mikhail Gorbachev, 65, former leader; Svyatoslav Fyodorov, 68, surgeon; Aleksandr Lebed, 46, former general; Vladimir Bryntsalov, 49, businessman; Martin Shakkum, 45, Russian Popular Socialist Party; and Yuri Vlasov, 60, former Olympic weight lifter.

## Decline of sport turns Euro 96 into a political football

BY RICHARD BEESTON

## CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK

WHAT many Russian pundits appear to have overlooked in the presidential campaign is that the most important election in their country's history may be settled on the playing fields of England.

One of the Communists' regular complaints about the loss of national pride and rise of decadent Western living habits in modern Russia is the failure of the country to match the sporting achievements of the former Soviet Union. However, the charge sounded a little hollow this week, particularly after the sensational victory by Yevgeni Kafelnikov, who became the first Russian to win a

grand slam tennis tournament after his victory in the French Open.

Attention is now focused on the Russian squad in the Euro 96 championship. Although the side played well at Anfield this week, they lost 2-1 against Italy, and now face a tough match against Germany on Sunday, the same day as the elections.

"If Chancellor Kohl really wants to help Yeltsin to get re-elected, he should order the Germans to score an own goal or two this Sunday," said one Russian football fan, in a bout of wishful thinking. "If we

cannot beat the Germans, people may decide it is time to get the Communists back in power."

□ While Russia's presidential election campaign may officially come to a close today, nobody seriously expects the candidates to give up the opportunity of having the last word in the voter's ear before polls open on Sunday morning.

Communist Party activists in the countryside are planning a blitz of remote farming regions in an effort to secure the rural vote, where entire communities are accustomed to voting as one. Not to be outdone, the pro-

Yeltsin media, which has devoted the lion's share of coverage to the Kremlin leader over the past few months of campaigning, is planning a more subtle but no less effective tactic.

Russia's state-owned television is screening *Burnt by the Sun*, the Oscar-winning film by Nikhita Mikhalkov, the country's most famous actor-director, who is also a staunch Yeltsin supporter.

The underlying message could be damaging to the Communists' election hopes. The story recounts the last day of a famous Soviet general, who is shot by Stalin's secret police.

□ Vladimir Bryntsalov, the egomaniac billionaire businessman and

presidential hopeful, may not have a chance of winning the elections but he has left a big impression on the campaign.

After boasting about his wealth, sexual prowess and showing off his young "trophy wife", the Russian entrepreneur is now determined to prove to the country that he has what it takes to rule.

This week he was spotted at the Duma, the Russian parliament, handing out copies of a doctor's certificate which he claimed proved medically that he was "physically and mentally fit" to run the country. The move may have placated some doubters but is unlikely to dispel the lingering misgivings of many.



Kafelnikov: first Russian to win major tennis title

## Mayor murdered 'to disrupt polling'

Moscow: Rival candidates in Russia's presidential elections renewed their allegations of a campaign of political violence yesterday, after the Mayor of a town near Moscow was shot dead outside his home (Richard Beeston writes).

Police said that Viktor Mosolov, the Mayor of Zhukovskiy, a town that is the

centre of Russia's aerospace research, was found in the stairwell of his apartment. He had been shot several times in the head.

The murder came after the explosion in a carriage of the Moscow metro on Tuesday that left four people dead, and the attempted assassination of the capital's Deputy Mayor,

who was seriously injured last week by a bomb blast.

President Yeltsin said the latest attack was the work of people who wanted to undermine the electoral process. "The idea of the new terrorist act against a representative of the authorities is evident: to intimidate people, to sow fear, to undermine belief in public

order," the Russian leader said in a message of condolence to the victim's family.

The suggestion that members of the opposition may have been involved in the incident was dismissed by Gennadi Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader. He said the death was the direct result of the anarchy ruling Russia.

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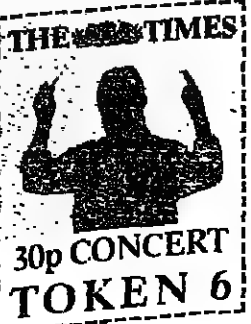
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## Colombian President cleared

FROM DAVID ADAMS  
IN MIAMI

A LATE-NIGHT vote in Colombia's Congress cleared President Samper of drug corruption charges, but the country's political crisis may be far from over.

US officials have insisted for months that the President is guilty of using cocaine cash to finance his 1994 election. Earlier this year Washington declared it no longer considered Colombia an ally in the drugs war. Now economic sanctions may follow.

The lower house of Congress, dominated by the President's Liberal Party, dismissed the charges by an overwhelming vote of 111-43. The margin of victory was no surprise to President Samper's critics, who allege that the congressional investigation was manipulated by political cronies of his who are deeply involved in drug corruption.

In theory the vote ends an impeachment process and clears the way for Señor Samper to complete his presidential term, which ends in 1998. However, opponents have vowed to continue efforts to unseat him, arguing that his political trial was heavily weighted in his favour. Some are already demanding that Congress declare its investigation null and void and reopen the case against the President.

Hours before the vote, police freed Juan Carlos Gaviria, the kidnapped brother of a former President. His captors, believed to be linked to drug traders and left-wing guerrillas, had threatened to kill him if Congress cleared Señor Samper.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Bangladesh faces hung parliament

Dhaka: Bangladesh's centrist Awami League strengthened its lead yesterday in the country's second general election in four months, but faced the prospect of a hung parliament. Overall results will be delayed by 116 recounts, ordered because some voting was disrupted.

After an election on Wednesday praised by foreign observers despite sporadic violence, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed, appeared likely to win power for the first time in 21 years. But it will need the support of minority parties. (Reuters)

## Nigeria talks

London: After six months of refusal, Nigeria has agreed to receive an eight-member Commonwealth task force to discuss a return to democracy. The talks will be held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on June 24 and 25.

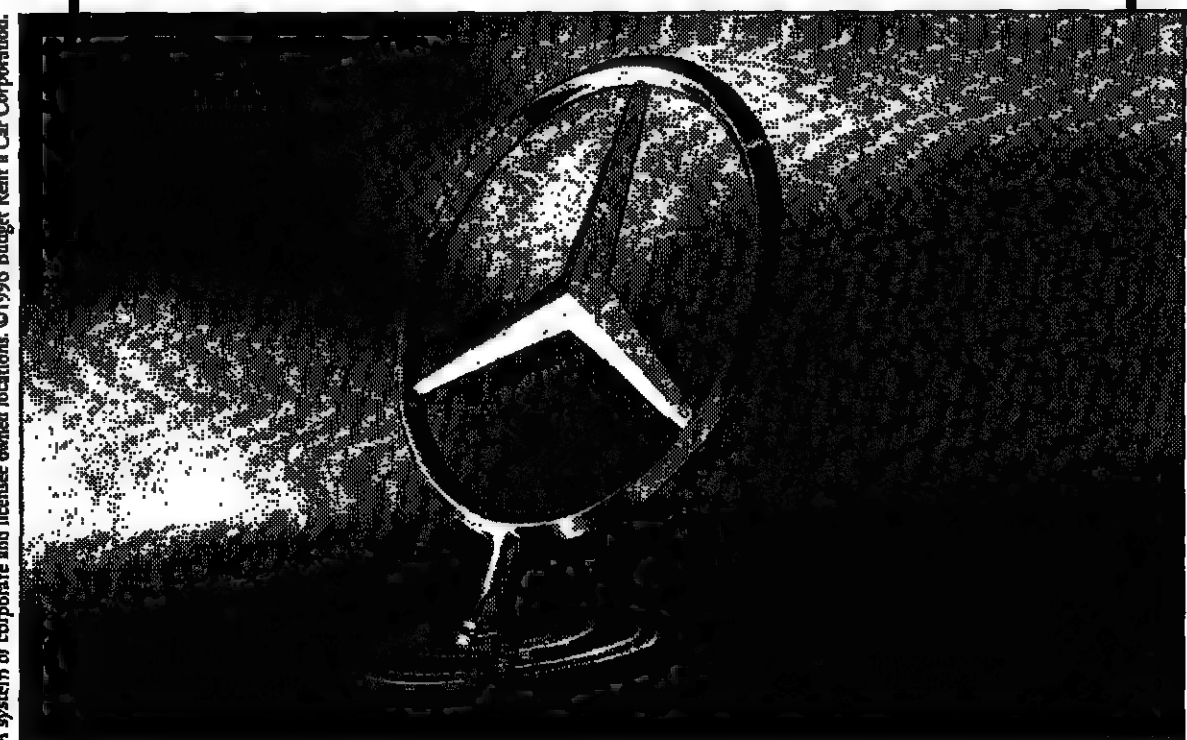
## Bahrain mission

London: Jeremy Hanley, Foreign Office Minister, will visit Bahrain on Sunday for two days of talks with the ruling al-Khalifa family. Riots by Shia Muslims and claims of an Iranian plot to oust the regime will be discussed.

## Roads to ruin

Atlanta: Police in Georgia have arrested 700 "violent felons", clearing them off the streets in advance of the Olympic Games to be held here next month. "We want the worst of the worst," said a police spokesman.

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# Borges — the man for whom the only truth was a lie

Jorge Luis Borges died in Geneva on this day ten years ago. The Argentine short-story writer was the most revered Latin American writer of his time.

Without Borges, there would be no García Márquez, Italo Calvino, or Julian Barnes. Today, his name is probably better known than his work, which in English enjoyed modish attention in the 1960s and 1970s. Then it dropped from view.

Three years ago, I was asked to review a new book on Borges. The commission came with worries about Borges's reactionary politics. I concentrated on his wit and imagination. The review did not appear.

This, perhaps, gives an idea of the depths to which Borges's reputation had sunk in some quarters. He had pledged his allegiance to "conservatism" in the 1960s. He had condoned Argentine Fascist generals in the 1970s. Only in the 1980s did he attempt more measured public utterances.

Readers of *The Times* will remember a wry Borges poem that the paper published three months after the end of the Falklands conflict. *Juan López and John Ward*. A statement from the writer read: "It seems to me an excellent opportunity to say in English that not all of us Argentines are demented."

Borges was indeed far from demented. He had one of the great literary intelligences of the century, equal with W.H. Auden in its range and complexity. He wrote the finest Spanish prose since Cervantes. In his famous stories, first made available here in a volume called *Labyrinths*, he revolutionised the art of fiction. In this light, his "politics" seem a trifling matter.

Borges was born in Buenos Aires in 1899 of middle-class parents and of mixed ancestry: Spanish, Portuguese, possibly Jewish and most important of all for "George" (as Borges was known to family and close friends), with an English grandmother. English was spoken at home along with Spanish. English literature was pivotal throughout his life.

The Borgeses moved to Switzerland in 1914. Borges's father had terrible eyesight and was seeking a cure—in vain. His son inherited the condition which

## On the tenth anniversary of the death of the writer Jorge Luis Borges, his life and legacy are examined by James Woodall

eventually made him the most famous blind writer of the 20th century after James Joyce.

Trapped in Switzerland by the First World War, Borges was educated in Geneva, where he discovered Walt Whitman, Schopenhauer and Expressionism. The family returned to Buenos Aires in 1921. There, Borges published three volumes of poetry before he was 30. He turned exclusively to prose—essays and criticism—in the 1930s, returning to poetry only in the late 1950s, after he'd gone blind. After a grave illness in 1933, he was inspired to try fiction, something he'd always been nervous about.

The result was a strange fable called *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, published in 1939. The story was a hybrid of critical essay and detective story, in which a dead poet attempts to "rewrite" Cervantes by reproducing the text of *Don Quixote*. It was the first of 33 extraordinary tales on which Borges's reputation now lies.

Through two volumes published in Buenos Aires, *Ficciones* (1944) and *El Aleph* (1949), Borges explored the outer reaches of fictional reality. He built improbable worlds and created metaphysical mayhem with punitive concision.

The Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa first read Borges in the 1950s: "Borges is clearly the most important writer in Spanish of the century. He changed the orientation of the language, which is exuberant, emotive, sentimental. Borges pulled Spanish out of this tradition, and turned it into a language that was intelligent, unadorned, precise. He also created diverse worlds, which were personal,

cosmopolitan, and open to so many curiosities."

In doing this, Borges suggested something many Post-Modernist writers have since tried but invariably failed to echo: that the so-called "realities" fiction has traditionally described are fraudulent. The only thing left for a writer to do is to celebrate his pretence, and revel in the tricks—in Borges's case, labyrinths, talismanic coins, daggers, literary criticism, fake scholars—at his disposal.

Yet underlying this apparently nihilistic position is the playful paradox central to Borges's world view: fiction is, in the end, preferable to fact.

By the early 1950s, his revolutionary work was done. He became a public figure, at home as director of the National Library in Buenos Aires, and, in the 1960s, when translations of his stories had brought him global renown, as a lecturer. He continued to write, verse mainly, and some stories.

Above all, he became "Borges", talkative, professional, genial, who adored the world looking in on him (largely because he couldn't see it), yet revealing little of the sweet-natured, emotionally clumsy man he remained.

"First and foremost," he said in 1972, "I think of myself as a reader, then as a poet, then as a prose writer." Borges never courted fame as a writer, but by the early 1970s he had attained guru status—the founder, it was thought, of an exciting new school of Latin American fiction called Magic Realism.

Borges cared nothing for this. García Márquez began writing under Borges's mesmeric spell, and the association of the two writers ever since has saddled Borges, misleadingly, with the

Magic Realist tag. He was, more simply, a prose innovator who happened to be Argentine.

Borges was also a private man. He lived with his mother in a modest flat in Buenos Aires for most of his life. He fell celibately in love many times, and even got married, briefly—aged 68—to a woman he'd courted 40 years before. "His relations with women, sex," observes Vargas Llosa, "these things created an enormous emptiness in Borges—yet without which he wouldn't have been the genius he was."

Until his death, Borges travelled, gave hundreds of interviews, and made ill-considered comments about world affairs. His acceptance of an award from Chile's General Pinochet in 1976 was probably the nail in the Nobel Prize coffin. That he never won it is seen today as one of the committee's greatest blunders.

Politically, Borges was consistent in just one area: his passionate hatred of Juan Perón, the dictator who ruled Argentina from 1946 to 1955 (and again briefly in 1973). In most other matters of public sensitivity, Borges was often naive or frivolous.

Yet to despise Borges for his politics shows little understanding of a man for whom the only truth was a lie, and who perceived the world as a phantasmagoria: by turns an illusory joke and a labyrinthine hell.

His final years were lightened by the companionship of a woman some 40 years his junior, named María Kodama. He married her weeks before his death from cancer in June 1986.

Kodama is the inheritor of his estate. Only last autumn Borges's Spanish copyrights became stabilised with a one million dollar deal done on Kodama's behalf. The future of Borges's work in English is more doubtful. What is certain is that books about the man will abound. The greatest challenge for them all will be to address his magisterial radicalism head-on, and to accept his capricious politics for what they were: capricious. As he told *The Times* in 1980: "I have no posts. I am a free man."

James Woodall's biography, *Borges, The Man in the Mirror of the Book*, will be published by Hodder on July 4.



Born in Buenos Aires, Borges had an English grandmother. English was spoken at home along with Spanish

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number?" but "Good morning, Cynthia speaking, which number do you require?" "It's proved very popular," a BT spokesman says. "The operators said they felt it established a rapport with customers and people do like that personal touch."

This is simply not true. People don't care if a rotweiler answers the telephone as long as they get their number, preferably inside ten seconds. This friendly approach is part of the pernicious "Have a nice day" insincerity from across the water and the Nineties need to convince

ourselves that despite the fact we're all trying to make money we really are nice and kind to each other. But the resulting word marathon is not just robotic but can be noisy and intrusive.

Most firms now refuse to put you through to their staff until after an exhausting series of questions and accom-

## Don't call us... please

panying beeps. "May I ask who's calling?" Brenda/Graham/Colin asks, before a monotone of beeps and clicks. Then it's "Just putting you through would be fine, thanks."

A receptionist for a firm of City lawyers explained that she asked for a name so that

she could announce it to partners, who could then greet clients in a friendly, personalised manner. "Hello, Mr Jamieson, I was just looking through your interesting file. Thank you for calling."

But what happens if the receptionist comes back and says "I'm sorry, Gloria Blenkinsop is away from her

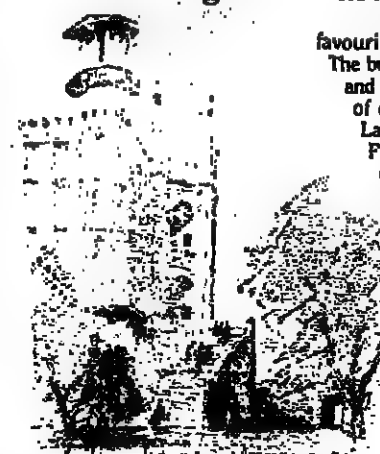
desk at present"? Are they just not there for you? They could be monitoring their calls. That isn't personal and friendly at all, it's sinister.

Where will it all end? Soon, Cynthia will be giving her star sign, favoured breakfast cereal and views on the American presidency, and we will be giving our favourite colour and a description of the person we want to speak to.

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The one-time star of the gossip columns is back in London, still worried about his laundry

# My wife said 'from tomorrow morning I am Lady Previn and don't you forget'

André Previn is in town, knighted in this year's Honours List. He was delighted when a jazz-playing friend wrote to say: "I now know two Knights — you and Gladys." We had an early breakfast at the Savoy before he went off to record *Desert Island Discs* — another accolade. It was "fendish" to choose, he said. "I wish people wouldn't regard music and musicians as they do the rankings at Wimbledon: Mozart one, Agassi two..."

Mozart is his number one, however. The other night he was cheered to the Barbican's rafters — conducting the LSO and the brilliant young soloist Gil Shaham on his Stradivarius — after the Mozart Third Violin Concerto. Previn at 67 has metamorphosed into a tiny, slightly stooping, bespectacled figure, custom-built for the podium. "There is no vestige of the gossip-column glamour that surrounded him in the days when he wore a long fringe

and "shameless" hipster flares. During our breakfast a woman from another table came up and said: "You look like someone I know. Are you Mr Sandbank?" (He enjoyed this name: he tells of an MGM doorman named Kenneth Hollywood, and Lassie's trainer who was "actually called Weatherwax".)

Previn heard about his honorary knighthood (for "furthering the artistic interchange between Britain and the United States") at home in rural New York State. At first he assumed the call from Sir John Kerr, our man in Washington, was one of his jokes. "Then I asked if it would be all right to tell people — and realised there was nobody home, so I told Barley, my Labrador, who was very unimpressed."

The presentation of the KBE and its "Ruritanian-style starburst medallion" took place at the embassy. Sir John had unearthed from the BBC the tape of an old *Morecambe and Wise* Show with Previn



The maestro's back in town: "You get that nightly renewal, through music," says Previn. "It's all worth it, because it's simply the best profession in the world"

playing stooge: "So 150 people in black tie and medals and sashes just fell about. It was sweet thing to do, because my children saw it for the first time."

His wife since 1982 — his fourth — is the former Heather Sneddon, an elegant Englishwoman whose natural habitat is a Surrey garden with a basket over one arm. She and their 12-year-old son Lukas ("who is an accomplished guitarist and unofficial mascot of five orchestras including the LSO") were just off to visit her parents in Woking. "Because of her background — her father was in the Foreign Office — my wife does enjoy the idea of being Lady Previn. I know you are so laid back that no awards have any effect on you," she said, "but starting tomorrow morning I am Lady Previn and don't you forget it."

So completely has Previn excised his old self from the record that he makes no mention in *Who's Who* of

## THE VALERIE GROVE INTERVIEW



for granted that I am an English conductor. And in Germany, there is a new coffee-table book of famous German conductors, and I'm in it."

He was born in Berlin. His family sailed for America in 1938 and fetched up in Hollywood because his lawyer father yearned for the sunshine seen in a Lorena Young movie.

Young André learnt English from films (a good thing, he says, that this was before the era of Tarantino) and at 16 he was already composing film music for MGM. His charming and funny memoir of his Hollywood years, *No Minor Chords*, was so well written his friend Philip Roth wrote him a note saying: "One more of these, and I conduct."

Hollywood in the 1940s was teeming with great musical figures from Europe: he played ping-pong with Schoenberg, and gave a recital of Stravinsky's *Piano Serenade*, while Stravinsky and Aldous Huxley sat in the front row. Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire both tried, but failed, to teach him even the simplest dance step. "My God," said Astaire, "I had to teach this step to a bear in a circus once, and he caught on pretty smartly."

In 1989, a Disney mogul tried to woo him back to Hollywood. Jeffrey Katzenberg invited Previn to his home, which made Versailles look like a toolshed, and asked him to remake *Fantasia*. But there was a catch. "Frankly," said Katzenberg, "I gotta tell you there's not a single piece of classical music that knocks my socks off."

Would Previn do *Fantasia* with Beatles music instead? "He was wonderfully nice and polite," Previn says. "And once I had turned him down, he just said 'OK, we'll find someone else'. And I thought, nothing has ever really changed there."

Like all world-class musicians he has his life booked up

for years: he will come back to the LSO and the Vienna Phil every year (the Musikverein in Vienna is for him the most thrilling concert hall in the world) and always fits in favourite orchestras like the New York Phil and the Boston Symphony. "It telescopes your life. But it can get out of hand: my wife said to me the other day 'we haven't been to Paris in years', and I said without thinking, 'It's not one of my favourite orchestras'."

He tells a spooky tale of touring Germany last year. In the medieval city of Lübeck, during a walk with Gil Shaham, he saw some books with old German lettering in an antiquarian bookseller's

look. That evening, in my Hamburg hotel, I undid the little parcel — and one of those books was my father's. He had signed his name in it.

That's *Twilight Zone*, isn't it? A world war had intervened. My father was never in Lübeck. I wasn't meant to be in Lübeck. And where have his books been for 50-odd years? I told the story to my son Fletcher, a smart and entertaining young man of 22 who was doing his German degree near Hamburg, and he said, "Listen, pop, I don't elect to believe this. Elect to believe I said, 'Don't get fancy with me'."

Previn gets by on five hours' sleep a night. His schedule this week included auditioning singers at Covent Garden, rehearsing concerts, a day's recording, performing at the Barbican with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa last night, and a chamber concert next Tuesday. Musicians in Britain, he says, are woefully underpaid. "Consider this: there are perhaps 15 world-class orchestras, each comprising 100 musicians. That's only 1,500 people who make the world's great music — they deserve something special."

"I gave the commencement address at the Curtis Institute, in Philadelphia, the best music school in the world. I tried to tell them the facts of life for a professional musician, which are basically not about glamour, but figuring out how to get your laundry done."

"We've just come back from a tour; eight cities in eight days, suitcases, and airports."

'No one forces us into it. You honestly don't do it for the money. It's just what we do. We get our reward in music'

window. "I said, 'My father once had a library full of books like this'. Later, Gil said why don't you go back and buy one? First we couldn't find the shop, and were just about to give up, when I saw it again, went in, and bought two Thomas Manns: *The Magic Mountain* and *Buddenbr-*

and being gone from the people you love. Around this time I always swear that I'm never going to have a schedule like this again."

"But I have to say this. First, no one forces us into it. You honestly don't do it for the money. And you don't do it because it will be good for your career, because you've got there already."

"What is left? It's just what we do. This will sound like Pollyanna, but we get our reward every night, in the fleeting two hours of music."

"Often, on a tour, you get off a bus and arrive in a dreadful

hall, with terrible acoustics, and the audience is straight from hell, and you go out onto the stage thinking 'let's just play and get outta here', but after about one minute you know you can't do that, because the only person you might possibly be punishing is the composer — and he's dead. So often the most adverse conditions provoke the most exciting performances."

"You get that nightly renewal, through music, which is inevitably better than you are. It's all worth it, because it's simply the best profession in the world."

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'There was nobody home, so I told Barley, my Labrador, about the knighthood. He was very unimpressed'

former wives: neither Dory Previn, who still sings her soulful songs of love and loss, nor Mia Farrow, although he does acknowledge their six children, including twin sons of 26. He told me he would not be answering any personal questions, even from Sue Lawley.

But there is plenty of material here for Tony Palmer, who is making Previn the subject of another enthralling film biography for the *South Bank Show*, centring on the opera Previn has written for the San Francisco Opera Company, opening in October 1996. It is an operatic version of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* — "I always said it was an opera but the music was missing."

Previn has become the consummate conductor-composer — Conductor Laureate of the LSO, which he ran for 11 years — with a deep affinity with Vaughan Williams and a mission to interpret new work by English composers.

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## Philip Howard



From *Don Giovanni* to *Don Carlos*, operas are set in Spain, but not in Spanish

**M**a in *Isabella* son già mille e tre! "But in Spain he's already had a thousand and three." Even billion-aires baronies who would pay a grand not to be forced to sleep through grand opera, as well as buffis who have known *Madam Butterfly* since she was a chrysalis, can sing along with Leporello's catalogue of Don Giovanni's conquests. But they never stop to consider the curious affair of the opera in Spain. Now is the time to do so. Especially in this week when *Don Carlos* opened the Verdi festival at Covent Garden and there was a melodrama over the reopening of the Madrid Opera House. In a mission statement of managerial ineptitude that makes even Covent Garden look almost efficient, the Madrid house has been closed for ten years for refurbishment.

The opera in Spain stays mainly inane. There are great Spanish opera singers and old opera houses in the Iberian world, one even halfway up the Amazon at Manaus. But the Spanish singers, like Leporello, sing in Italian, or German, or French or even in English. Of the 20 premier-division operas, half are set in Spain, and half of those in Seville. The prisoners in *Fidelio* emerge from darkness into the white sunlight in Seville. Carmen goes down from the sunlight into the dark outside the bullring in Seville. In Spain, *Figaro* intrigues. Don Pasquale does the decent thing for young lovers. If *Trovatore* serenades, there is more to *Ernani* than meets the eye, and Count Almaviva sexually harasses Susanna. There is a Wagnerian Spanish opera, *Parsifal's* Grail Mountain is in south-eastern Spain, contrary to the geography of the German Minnesingers. Even in the larks around the Turkish seraglio, Constanze and Belmonte are Spanish lovers. But they make love in German or Italian, not Spanish.

The curious affair of the opera in Spain is that it is all foreigners singing and booming about foreign notions of Spain. The opera bibles list about 30 Spanish opera composers, including some like Falla of whom even non-operamans have heard. But Isaac Albéniz's *Merlin*, part of a projected Arthurian trilogy, remains unperformed.

So why no great Spanish opera, in the camp art imitating ancient Greek singing-and-dancing with chorus and story? And named from the Latin "the works", cognate linguistically with *hors d'oeuvre*, operation and average? There are some runners as explanations. You could say that there were no great Spanish composers between the Renaissance and the 20th century. You might suggest that the gulf destroyed Spanish music. Zarzuela, the bizarre Spanish comic opera, diverted talents that might otherwise have composed and written opera. Spain, having been briefly the world's superpower, was an exotic land of extremes, so European composers looked to Spain for politically dangerous themes, just as Shakespeare set his contemporary leaders in Rome or the Wars of the Roses. If *Figaro* was singing a man's a man for a what, it was more safely set in Seville than Paris.

If you stop to think about it, opera is the oddest of arts. It is, of course, about emotion as much as thinking. I take my opera (muddled) mostly from scratched vinyl of a certain age. But in its odd way it is high art. What we need is a guide, because, even with the best intentions always, I am never actually going to read the libretto and the music before I listen. Peter Gellhorn is such a guide. For years he was conductor at Glyndebourne and Covent Garden. He now plays the piano, sings all parts from Queen of the Night to Osmín, thrums on the piano with his script, and guides us through an opera, even *Götterdämmerung*, in three hours. Gellhorn has taken us groupies through the Ring, and will wind up his Verdi season with *Falstaff* at Burgh House, Hampstead, on July 4. He explains the humour as well as the leitmotifs in Wagner. Until I met Gellhorn, I found the music wonderful but the plots silly in Wagner. If one could afford it, what one should do is have a training session with Peter Gellhorn before going to the opera. He is the man to answer the conundrum of Spanish opera.



## Is there life outside?

British withdrawal from the EU need not be suicidal, says Michael Gove

**W**ithdrawal. It sounds so final. The word — with its echoes of retreat, connotations of failure and shades of Dunkirk — has made debate difficult. Until recently no respectable politician was inclined to attempt a dispassionate assessment of how Britain benefits from its membership of the EU and what its prospects might be outside. Questioning membership was as eccentric as advocating votes for women in the 1870s or opposing incomes policies in the 1970s. Last Tuesday Tony Blair accused the 74 Conservative MPs who voted for William Cash's Referendum Bill of secretly favouring withdrawal from the EU, as though it were somehow shameful — attachment to an independent nation state now being the love that dare not speak its name.

One does not need to favour withdrawal to find this exaggerated. The pursuit by Britain's European partners of deeper integration has placed strains on this country's political, economic and legal systems. That strain may be, to paraphrase Norman Lamont in another context, a price worth paying, but it would be practising a deceit on the British public not to examine the costs and benefits of membership scrupulously and to consider if there is a worthwhile alternative.

It is Mr Lamont who has been most prominent in questioning what benefits Britain derives from membership. At the Conservative Party conference in 1994, he drove the debate on European integration, animated by the painful parliamentary process of ratifying the Maastricht treaty, into new territory. He observed that he could see no "single concrete economic advantage that unambiguously derived from membership of the EU". He floated the possibility of leaving, at a time when all but the recluses who had opposed entry in the 1970s still talked of reforming from within.

Mr Lamont would prefer to see the EU abandon deeper integration and evolve into a community of nation states, but he fears that while Britain waits for 40 years of European integration to go into reverse, the costs of membership continue to rise. Britain contributes £7.7 billion gross and £3.5 billion net to the EU budget. Much of the money spent here by the EU is devoted to schemes which this Government would itself never fund. The common agricultural policy adds £6 billion to the nation's food

bill, although half of that goes in support to British farmers, which any government might wish to maintain. Patrick Minford, Professor of Economics at Liverpool University, calculates that contributions and agricultural costs from which Britain does not gain add up to around £10 billion. That is 1.5 per cent of our national income, or just under half the Government's forecast deficit. Ironically, if the Government had that money back it would be in a stronger position to qualify for entry into a single currency.

Advocates of exit argue that the damage is more than fiscal. The authority of Parliament is weakened, separatist forces in Scotland and Wales are indulged, and the law is corrupted by the European Court of Justice.

Ministers contest the bleakness of the pessimists' assessment, but recognise that while the momentum for integration is maintained, Britain must protect itself from the unhappy consequences. Britain will veto the wider integration of the EU, but opt out of what it cannot prevent. Cynics interpret this policy, known as "variable geometry", as giving Brussels an inch and then watching as it takes several kilometres.

The problem for the sceptics is that the EU's structures seem designed specifically to propel nations towards a single goal. The Commission, Court and Parliament detest derogations and try to outflank opt-outs. The social chapter opt-out has been a legislative Maginot Line, unable to prevent directives infiltrating British law. Any further flurry of opt-outs at future conferences would be policed by institutions such as the Commission and Court, which exist to advance integration. They are referees wearing the opposing team's colours.

Leaving the EU might be a wrench, but it need not be a retreat into isolation and North Korean autarky. Its advocates believe it could be a liberation. Far

from a withdrawal, it might be entry to a wider world. Four possibilities have been considered by sceptical Tories. They are, broadly, "the Norwegian", "the Swiss", "the American" and "the untried". The Norwegian path — membership of the European Economic Area but not of the EU — has also been taken by Liechtenstein and Iceland. The charm of the EEA has been tarnished by the decision of Sweden, Finland and Austria to leave it for the EU, but with majorities in Sweden and Austria now, apparently, regretting the decision, and Norway flourishing, it should not be dismissed. Membership provides access to the single market, with freedom of movement for goods, services, capital and people without involvement in the common fisheries or agricultural policies or any need to subscribe to shared fiscal, monetary, social, foreign or security policies. It does, however, mean paying into cohesion funds and accepting single-market regulations without having the chance to shape them. It is, in the view of many sceptics, a poorer deal than Britain might secure.

The Swiss option is a simple bilateral free-trade arrangement with the EU. Switzerland is free to apply EU regulations as it wishes. In some sectors, notably banking, it benefits from not doing so. Trade with the EU has not suffered. Of Switzerland's exports, 63 per cent go to the EU, as against only 47 per cent of Britain's. Although Swiss goods can freely enter Europe, Swiss citizens do not enjoy the freedom to work in the EU, which Britons have. Any British government would wish to preserve that.

The American arrangement is to have no formal link with the EU at all, merely access to markets guaranteed by international agreements. Although outside the single market, the US and South Korea have, since 1990, increased their exports to the EU faster than Britain has. The Uruguay Round of negotiations by the World Trade Organisation low-

ered the EU's external tariff from 5.7 per cent to 3.6 per cent, making market penetration far easier. Although a tariff is still a tariff, it could be less of a burden for business than high social costs exported from Germany and regulations imposed by Brussels. As for the prospect of a protectionist Europe wreaking revenge on a departing Britain, that has receded since the World Trade Organisation was given new powers to make retaliatory action against any recalcitrant bloc easier.

There is ultimately no reason, according to free thinkers, why an independent Britain should follow any established path. Britain is in a unique position. It has leverage. It has a trade deficit with the EU and our partners would fight hard to preserve their access to the British market. Moreover, as the beef war has so vividly illustrated, Britain still has a veto on future development of the EU. Abandoning the veto would allow other nations to integrate without hindrance. In return for the freedom to go their own way, they might concede full freedom of movement in a federal Europe to British goods and citizens.

**M**erely contemplating a life outside causes palms to go sweaty in King Charles Street. For diplomats used to trading sovereignty for influence in the Brussels bourse, the thought that sovereignty might be retrieved, and independence asserted, is deeply congenial. But flirting with a future outside could actually increase our influence.

France wants Britain to share Europe's defence burden and counter-balance Germany. Italy wants an ally to balance the Franco-German axis. The northern EU states value Britain's cash, and its influence in pressing for liberal economics. All of these states might be more inclined to accept British arguments if they thought Britain were prepared, if perpetually frustrated, to leave them to each other.

It is still in Britain's interest to stay in the EU, to prevent, if possible, a profound upset in the balance of power in Europe and to make co-operation easier on matters of mutual interest. Of course, contemplating withdrawal, like relaxing divorce laws, may make separation more likely, but the knowledge that a relationship could, reluctantly, be dissolved may be one of the best ways of ensuring that it remains equitable.

## Why Bibi may need Labour

Israel will reject theocracy, Lawrence Freedman says

**N**ext week the Israeli Parliament will reconvene with a new Prime Minister, Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, and Arab leaders will meet to pronounce on the implications for peace of this election. A verdict remains difficult until the details of Netanyahu's coalition Government are announced. The presumption is still that it will be composed of individuals unwilling to offer many compromises for the sake of peace. Some in his own Likud Party, including the last Likud Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, have called for the Oslo accords with the Palestinians to be torn up. This attitude presumes Arab enmity, and that peace accords are only devices to persuade Israel to lower its guard. It looks forward to more settlements on the Golan Heights and the West Bank, securing the Israeli claim. The hawks will feel betrayed if, after their election victory, Netanyahu simply follows the path marked out by Shimon Peres.

Yet if he diverges from that path, Netanyahu's claim to be interested in peace will become progressively less convincing, and it will not be only the Arabs who will be upset. President Clinton, securing the Israeli claim, including the pending agreement to remove Israeli troops from Hebron. His challenger, Bob Dole, has been in the past notably hostile to the amount of financial aid America still provides to Israel.

Moreover Netanyahu's first decisions will be taken against a background of a painful Hezbollah campaign against Israeli troops in the so-called "security zone" in southern Lebanon. In the face of these provocations, he might decide to take tough action, going beyond the airstrikes and artillery bombardments relied upon by Peres in his ill-fated Grapes of Wrath operation last April. This could mean a full-scale land invasion — which would probably be no more successful in crushing Hezbollah. Meanwhile, growing tension on the West Bank will make it difficult to abide by the agreement made by Peres to move Israeli troops out of Hebron.

He must also decide how, if at all, to open up the borders with the occupied territories. These are currently closed, denying Palestinians the opportunity to work in Israel in order also to deny them the opportunity to plant bombs. Getting this changed is one of the most pressing concerns of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat — for which he might even be prepared to offer some renegotiation over Hebron.

**I**f the closure continues, it will undermine the logic of an activist settlement policy, for it will confirm the passing of the dream of a Greater Israel. It will be hard to justify spending scarce resources inserting insecure pockets of pioneers into a land which is now beyond colonisation. Even if the border controls are eased, regular military crackdowns might combine with minimum political progress to feed a resurgence of Palestinian militancy.

This is the greatest threat to Netanyahu's new Government. He came to power by playing on Israeli fears of terrorism, so he will be exceptionally vulnerable to further outrages. A campaign of car bombs in Israeli streets would mock the claim that the difference between Likud and Labour is that one has an answer to terrorism and the other has not. In reality, Netanyahu's answers to terrorism are unlikely to be much better than those of Peres, and they may be worse. The reality of Israel's security predicament is that it depends on Arab leaders restraining their extremists, and Netanyahu will find that if they are to do this he needs to offer them something in return.

**H**e may try to mimic President Assad of Syria, by following a strategy of procrastination, talking without conceding, in the hope that the other side's patience breaks first. But this strategy has hardly worked for Assad, who has let his best negotiating opportunity slip from his grasp, and is now anxiously trying to persuade those Arab leaders who have already made peace with Israel to back his demands. Paradoxically, the best way for Israel to isolate Syria would be to withdraw from southern Lebanon, where the exposure of Israeli troops to ambush is providing Assad with his principal means of keeping up the pressure.

The extent to which Netanyahu can engage in any imaginative diplomacy depends on how much he is held back by his coalition. His problems here are not only satisfying the ample egos of his colleagues, and their conflicting attitudes towards dealing with Arabs, but also the excessive demands of the religious parties, which alarm most Israelis with their efforts to turn the country into a theocracy, and their desire for subsidies for their constituents. It is these demands that are at present holding up the formation of the coalition.

Netanyahu's most deft move would be to form a grand coalition with Labour. This could be presented as an attempt to close the divisions in the country that the election revealed, to ensure that domestic policy is not driven by special interests and that international policy reflects the contending desires of Israelis for peace and security. Few would bet on this, yet the option is being actively discussed in Jerusalem. Even if his first coalition is drawn from the Right, the conflicting pressures upon him may become irreconcilable so it would not be surprising to see Netanyahu eventually falling back on this option.

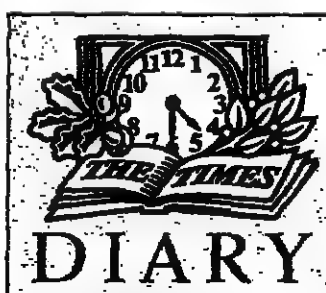
## School run

LABOUR'S policy on education is riddled with U-turns, fudges and Harriet Harman's difficulties. Now, after decades of blanket opposition to private education, there are signs that the party is coming round to the idea. In a first for Labour, one of Tony Blair's team is to open an independent school this weekend.

Glenda Jackson has agreed to be guest of honour at the opening ceremony for Southbank International School in her Hampstead constituency. The coeducational establishment caters for pupils aged 3 to 13 and charges up to £9,000 a year. Older children can go to the sister school in Kensington which is billed in *The Independent Schools Yearbook* as taking pupils principally from Britain, the US and Scandinavia.

"This is the end of our first year in Hampstead, but Glenda Jackson will officially declare it open," says the headmaster, Milton Toubkin. "We asked her because she is the local MP and is particularly well known. The combination made her the natural choice."

The Independent Schools Information Service "cannot remember" another case of a Labour MP opening one of the schools it



serves. But David Blunkett had his hand slapped when he suggested that Labour would abolish the charitable status of independent schools. The policy is being reviewed, and Glenda is unabashed by her foray. "I do try to visit the independent schools in my constituency," she explains.

## Canary waif

VIBRANT among those who packed London's Reform Club on Wednesday evening for the *Times* Diary party was Teresa Gorman, Euro-sceptic, glamorous granny and fashion-plate.

She sported a dazzling canary

yellow number, embroidered with bright flowers, which put Ivana Trump's sequinned trousers in the shade and caught the eye of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. So impressed was one guest that he turned to dress-designer Amanda Wakeley (customer: Princess of Wales) to congratulate her on what must have been one of her outfits. Amanda remarked politely that the Gorman two-piece wasn't quite her style.

● A press release concerning nuclear proliferation arrives from the People's Republic of China. "China conducted a nuclear test on 8 June 1996," it says — and goes



Teresa: glamorous guest

on to refer to "nuclear weapons" throughout the bulletin. Scrambled code?

## Red menace

AS PESSIMISTS south of the border fear that England will struggle against the Scots at Wembley tomorrow, there are moves in Tony Blair's office to see them blasted off the park. The Labour leader's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, is dusting down his bagpipes to blow for his team at the match.

"I can't decide whether to take my bagpipes or not," muses perhaps the world's biggest Burnley supporter. "My children aren't very keen on the idea, because the awful thing is they will be supporting England. Even worse than that they are Manchester United supporters. It's not good, all these people supporting Manchester United. It's a bad business."

## Up trumps

A LIFETIME'S ambition will be realised for the Bishop of Wakefield on Sunday when he conducts a brass band on *Songs of Praise*. When the Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch moved to Yorkshire in 1991, his latent passion for trumpets and trombones was awakened. He was invited to wave the baton for the



A new model for Tim Jeffries: Inés Sastre

Stanley Newmarket Band — and now stardom beckons.

"In a way conducting is much like being a bishop," he says, blowing his own trumpet. "You are drawing out the gifts of each musician by helping to keep them in rhythm and harmony."

## Full book

FIRST one supermodel; now another. After breaking up with Elle "The Body" Macpherson, the chis-

el-chinned Green Shield Stamps her Tim Jeffries has snared Spain's leading fashion model Inés Sastre, the Max Factor girl.

The couple went public at the Paris Open where they snuggled up to watch the tennis, and they are pictured in the new edition of the gushing glossy *Hola*. "Inseparable" purrs the magazine in a nudge-and-a-wink editorial. "Incorrigible," retort Spanish fashion pundits.

P.H.S





## BACK TO BEEF

Three new problems for government and industry

Throughout the political crisis caused by the announcement of possible health risks in beef, the public has sought one thing above all: reliable knowledge which helps to eliminate doubt over any connection between BSE in animals and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in human beings. Genuine advances in scientific research are the only true guide to what measures governments must take to protect public health. The policies of European governments are otherwise guesswork based on varying estimates of what is required to reassure consumer confidence.

Three more nails were banged into the coffin of Britain's beef industry yesterday. First, an Anglo-French team of scientists disclosed new evidence which strongly suggests that feed contaminated with BSE is connected to the appearance of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in monkeys. Secondly, French scientists claimed to have warned the European Commission of the risks of disease transmission weeks before the British Government's announcement in March: they accused EU officials in Brussels of trying to suppress their warnings. Thirdly, the row intensified between Britain, France and the European Commission over who knew what and when about the animal feed banned in Britain being exported to France in the late 1980s. The cumulative effect of such developments is to strengthen the view that neither authorities nor food companies have told the full truth.

It is the new scientific research that counts the most heavily. Dr James Ironside, the leading British scientist investigating the elusive truth about the two diseases, says that yesterday's announcement in Paris "strengthens the hypothesis that the cases of CJD may be linked to BSE". While this cannot count as conclusive, the burden of proof is steadily shifting towards requiring

beef producers to show beyond all doubt that BSE cannot enter the food chain. That will mean not only being able to convince the British authorities, but being able to reassure experts from the EU and from other EU governments that rules are enforced, that risks are being ruthlessly suppressed and that the commitment to public health is paramount.

The Government might reply that these conditions are already fulfilled. But a daisy-chain of fumbled and badly presented decisions has failed the test which governments facing public health crises must pass. Corrective measures must convince the people whose health the Government is trying to protect.

Ministers have changed their minds too often about the size of the cattle cull, ranging from the Deputy Prime Minister's pressure for a cull of the entire British beef herd down to the present, much more moderate plans. By failing to tell the European Commission beforehand that it was about to announce a shift in scientific opinion on BSE, the Government in general — and the Ministry of Agriculture in particular — revealed a feeble grasp of the tactics and strategy required to wage the battle of ideas which it must fight. Revelations about feed have done more harm than any disclosures about the animals themselves. The Government failed to order the destruction of old feed stocks: eight years after a ban was imposed, some mills were discovered to be using sheep remains.

The Government's grudging, defiant and industry-dominated attitude to public concerns over BSE still requires an overhaul after several bruising weeks at the bar of world opinion. The Government's strategy for BSE still lacks the vigour and competence to carry conviction abroad — and the humility to acknowledge that the scientific verdict has not yet been returned.

## KOHL'S POLICE PROJECT

British suspicions of Europol remain valid

If the German Chancellor's preferences predominate, the European Union summit in Florence next week will be centred not on beef but on the proposed extension of the powers of Europol. Even if this substitution of issues is achieved, easier relations between the United Kingdom and its European partners are unlikely.

Since 1990 Helmut Kohl has conducted a campaign aimed at creating a pan-EU equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While he succeeded in establishing an embryonic body, Europol, in the Maastricht treaty, that organisation has been limited to the function of information exchange between different national police forces. Its present prospectus covers narcotics, automobile theft and illicit migration. While this has produced some valuable results, the Chancellor remains far more ambitious about its future role. He attempted to advance that goal at the Cannes gathering of EU leaders last year and will return to the attack again in Italy.

Herr Kohl's admirers might regard this as part of the man's wider and nobler vision of the future of Europe. The underlying motivations are, however, more nationalist in character. The end of the Cold War has left Germany vulnerable to increased flows of international crime, especially on its eastern boundaries. In particular the smuggling of nuclear material, hard drugs and illegal immigrants has become big and inconvenient business. The various strands of the Russian mafia are a major problem for Bonn. Hence German interest in the creation of a European FBI that would be more effective at preventing such activities reaching their borders.

To advance Europol beyond its current

status requires a unanimous decision on who should arbitrate on its powers in the likely event of disputes over its authority. Bonn has campaigned for the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to have this task. Resistance has been mounted by the British Government partly because no need for an ECJ role has been established, but largely because issues of criminal justice were assigned to the "third pillar" of Maastricht — namely that of inter-governmental co-ordination. Michael Howard has fought vigorously to preserve that status.

The struggle over Europol symbolises much of what is both right and wrong about the present European Union. It is sensible and desirable to encourage member states to work together in the fight against organised crime. Whether Europol is offering any distinctive service from that already provided by Interpol is debatable, but it obviously does more good than harm. That, however, is an entirely different matter from whether the EU needs a supranational body to take charge of intelligence efforts.

In that light the move towards the ECJ rather than the Council of Ministers as the ultimate custodian of its activities is unnecessary and unwelcome. There is no substantive proof that an EU FBI is desirable, and good reason to suspect the opposite. German sources have suggested that in return for Herr Kohl's reluctant tolerance of a form of framework for beef exports, Britain should allow his pet project to prosper. That would not be an honourable bargain for the Government to make. Regardless of what is John Major's general policy towards the veto within the EU by the time he reaches Florence, he should continue to exercise it in this area.

## PRESCOTT'S EDUCATION

Britain has changed since the old Ruskin days

John Prescott's speech in Oxford last night was billed as a forceful restatement of traditional Labour values and philosophy on education. In particular, it was suggested by some sources that its defence of comprehensive schools and its stress on the principle of equality represented an attack on the direction that Tony Blair has taken. Frantic discussions have taken place to minimise the divisions between the two.

In the event, Mr Prescott's words were as much about personal biography as politics. His choice of venue was significant as his choice of subject. Although he failed his 11-plus examination, Mr Prescott got a second chance in his twenties at Ruskin College, the trade union-sponsored institute in Oxford. Without that route, it is unlikely that he would have found his way to the House of Commons and now to the very edge of the Cabinet table. This experience largely explains his instinctive suspicion, close to hostility, towards selection.

No one, however, could or would want to recreate that past. The old rigid system placed an excessive weight on one piece of educational evidence at the age of 11. Transfer between grammar schools and secondary moderns was exceptionally difficult. Thirty years ago Ruskin College was one of very few places providing another avenue for those rejected before their teenage years. The unstable mechanisms of the 1950s and 1960s should not be restored. But they would not have to be. Greater "setting", within comprehensive schools, the

essence of the Blair argument last week, allows for much greater flexibility than in the past. A common curriculum, regular and published, testing throughout a school career, and a single, universal exam at 16 are all much better safeguards against discarding the late developer at an early age, or downgrading others. These innovations, introduced by the Conservatives and now apparently endorsed by the Labour leader, minimise the chance of future fates like Mr Prescott's.

There are now many more means for a second chance. The Oxford where Mr Prescott spoke has colleges — Kellogg and Manchester — that deal overwhelmingly with mature students, most of whom were not star pupils at school. It has a thriving department of continuing education. In its days as a polytechnic, Oxford Brookes University was a leader in the "modular" form of teaching that has encouraged huge participation by part-time students. Hundreds of others in the city itself will have benefited from the Open University. The idea that learning is a life-time experience and access to it should not be constrained by age is now thoroughly accepted.

Labour's deputy leader thus starts from a valid position. But Britain has changed. A greater emphasis on selection does not need to come at the cost of closing down chances for others. Diversity and quality can be reconciled with open opportunity today in a manner that was hard to conceive a generation back.

## Call for tougher action on CO<sub>2</sub>

From the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, and others

Sir, The Government is a signatory of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, committing the United Kingdom to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 to 1990 levels. Current trends indicate that this target will be achieved, but there is a very real danger that emissions will once more increase after that date unless further measures are taken.

Continued increases in the global emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels are likely to lead to climate change at a rate greater than the Earth has experienced at any time during the last 10,000 years. Since it is developing countries which are most vulnerable to such climate change, it is the poor of the world whose livelihood will be most endangered. Climate change is a moral issue as well as a matter of scientific concern.

In March last year delegations of the countries that have ratified the convention met in Berlin, but no binding targets for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions beyond the year 2000 were agreed. Further negotiations are taking place in the hope of agreeing targets before the next meeting in 1997.

It is the industrialised countries that have contributed most to the climate-change problem through their greenhouse-gas emissions, and the Secretary of State for the Environment has urged all such countries to agree to reduce these by 5 to 10 per cent below 1990 levels before 2010. The Government's official Panel on Sustainable Development has welcomed his call, but pointed out that even such a modest target will require much greater energy efficiency and energy saving than at present by domestic users and industry, and in transport.

A change in attitude is required by both Government and individuals, and for this reason we welcome the current initiative of the World Council of Churches in launching a petition on climate change which calls upon the Government to adopt firm, clear policies and targets, and the public to accept the necessary consequences. Six years ago you thundered that "the church's espousal of these [environmental] concerns... can contribute powerfully to the material salvation of the planet from mankind's greed and indifference" (leading article, September 18, 1990). We believe a positive response to the petition will in the long term improve the quality of life for all.

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN HOUGHTON,  
Chairman, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.  
DAVID BELLAMY,  
(Biomist and broadcaster).  
R. J. BERRY,  
Chairman, Environmental Issues Network of the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland.  
JOHN HABBGOOD,  
(Archbishop of York, 1983-89).  
MARTIN HODGKIN,  
(President, Zoological Society of London).  
T. L. JOHNSTON,  
(President, Royal Society of Edinburgh).  
AARON KLUG,  
(President, Royal Society).  
GHILLEAN PRANCE,  
(Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew).  
20 University College London,  
Department of Biology,  
Gower Street, WC1  
June 13.

## Social housing

From District Councillor Susan Band

Sir, Ian Murray (Viewpoint, June 6) calls for more Government spending on social housing in the interests of future savings in health and social security bills. Undoubtedly there is every need to accelerate the upgrading of social housing and here government grants play a significant part. But the main issue is sheer lack of low-cost housing stock, following implementation of the "right-to-buy" policy and other factors. In my own district population, 83,000, which has sold nearly 50 per cent of its stock, the waiting list has risen from 404 in 1990 to 625 in March 1996.

The Government has a unique opportunity to make a substantial addition to social housing through the sale of its MoD residential estates. The MoD and the DoE should co-operate to allocate a proportion of the surplus MoD housing to non-profit making housing associations whose rents are tailored to low-income tenants. Given the potential long-term profit to be made by the successful purchaser, this allocation should not seriously dent the capital receipt for the MoD while providing a tangible and well-served social investment.

I am sensitive to the apprehensions of service families about the nature of "mixed developments" (Housing Associations Weekly, May 24) but this is surely a matter to be resolved at local level.

Yours sincerely,  
SUSAN BAND,  
Cedar House,  
Thackhams Lane, Hartley Wintney,  
Nr Hook, Hampshire.  
June 11.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

## Money supply and inflation danger

From Professor Tim Congdon

Sir, Your leader "The kindest cut" (June 7) welcomes the Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to cut base rates to 5½ per cent last week and criticises "Cassandras at the Bank of England" who have been talking "ominously of the risks of repeating the mistakes of 1986-87, when an unsustainable boom led to the bust of the early 1990s". But in one respect the situation is very similar to that in the mid-1980s. As then, there has been a clear and well-defined acceleration in monetary growth, as measured by the broad monetary aggregates which include bank (and building society) deposits.

Between early 1985 and early 1986 the annual rate of monetary growth increased from slightly above 10 per cent to over 15 per cent. If this acceleration were to continue, it justified forecasts of above-trend growth in demand and output in late 1986 and 1987, and rising inflation in 1988 and later. (In fact, I made such forecasts in articles in *The Times* in 1986.) Policymakers ought to have countered the upturn in monetary growth in 1986. If they had done so, the Lawson boom would never have occurred.

Between late 1994 and late 1995 the annual rate of monetary growth increased from under 5 per cent to about 10 per cent. So the acceleration in monetary growth was much the same last year as in 1985, although the levels of monetary growth (and indeed of inflation itself) were happily somewhat lower.

In 1996 monetary growth has re-

mained roughly at about 10 per cent. At current interest rates, there are no compelling reasons to expect a slowdown in the next few quarters. Monetary growth is in fact running at or above the top of the Government's own monitoring range.

In early 1996 the economy has probably been growing at a beneath-trend rate. Inflation is not an immediate problem and it is unlikely to trouble policy-makers before 1998 or 1999. However, contrary to your leader, there is a large body of evidence to suggest that growth will recover in late 1996, led by consumer spending and the housing market. Moreover, this recovery will occur without any cut in interest rates. As it happens, this is also the Government's own forecast.

In view of the unsustainably rapid growth in credit and money now being recorded, the Chancellor's decision to reduce interest rates was not "the kindest cut". Instead it was unnecessary and misguided, and yet another demonstration of how politics interferes with sound monetary management in this country. Monetary growth of 10 per cent a year cannot, over the medium and long run, be reconciled with inflation of 2½ per cent or less.

Yours etc,  
TIM CONGDON  
(Member, Treasury Panel of Independent Forecasters),  
Lombard Street Research Ltd,  
Cannon Bridge,  
25 Dowgate Hill, EC4.  
June 11.

## Blair's school reforms

From Dr Ronald Davie

Sir, Mr Blair's speech (report and leading article, June 8) about the Labour Party's position on grouping by ability, or "setting", in schools leaves one uneasy.

My concern is that the whole question of the size and nature of the groups in which children are taught is becoming politicised. The debate about the merits of "whole class" teaching is another example of this, as is the controversy about selection in education and the issue of integrating children with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

For some purposes children can appropriately be "taught" in very large groups, eg a school assembly. Sometimes they can be taught as a whole class; sometimes groups of varying size within a class are called for. At times each child will need the individual attention of the teacher.

Knowing and planning which grouping is appropriate is one of the

most important and skilled professional judgments which schools and teachers make. It should not, as your leading article points out, be an ideological issue.

Therefore, my own unease about Mr Blair's speech is that it might be taken to suggest that by placing children in sets for particular subjects the resulting groups will be homogeneous. The reality is that individuals within each set will still have diverse needs, abilities and characteristics, whether they are in the top set or the bottom, and the teaching must take account of that. To neglect this diversity is to produce sub-standard education.

Yours etc,  
RONALD DAVIE  
(Chairman, Policy Sub-committee),  
National Association for Special Educational Needs,  
Nassen House,  
4/5 Amber Business Village,  
Amber Close, Amington,  
Tamworth, Staffordshire.  
June 8.

## Cochlear implants

From Lord Astor of Hever

Sir, If implanted early enough, profoundly deaf children can benefit more than any other group from cochlear implants. As your leader (June 5; also letters, June 8) rightly says, opponents of these devices should consider carefully before denying these children the opportunity to play an active part in both the deaf and hearing worlds.

For the many millions of people who, like the splendid Jack Ashley, lose their hearing later in life, implants offer some hope of a return to a familiar world of sound which most of us take for granted. As this remarkable technology improves, it will become a viable alternative to inadequate hearing aids. The current de-

bate should not be allowed to obscure its potential and exacerbate public misunderstanding of this devastating disability.

Yours faithfully,  
ASTOR OF HEVER (Vice-President, Hearing Research Trust),  
House of Lords,  
June 6.

From Mrs I. Mills

Sir, I note that Mr Sheil (photograph, June 5), who is opposed to aids for defective hearing, does not reject spectacles as an aid to vision. What is the difference?

Yours faithfully,  
I. MILLS,  
103 Holtsport Top Lane,  
Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.  
June 5.

## V & A extension

From Sir Brian Young

Sir, The jousting between Robert Armstrong (article, June 4) and William Rees-Mogg (article, May 27; see also letters, May 24, June 4, 5, 12) has not addressed the key question: would the V&A do better to spend money on resolving the problems of its vast existing space and on free entry than on attracting attention with something just worthy of discussion than an "ace call"? Has the existence of the National Lottery distorted its priorities?

Yours truly,  
BRIAN YOUNG,  
Hill End, Woodhill Avenue,  
Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire.

From Mr John Melvin

Sir, Martin Pawley (letter, June 5) suggests that in order to judge the merits

of Daniel Libeskind's proposals for the extension to the V&A we should be told more about the embodied energy costs and its thermal performance. This information would be essential if the V&A were merely proposing to erect a Thermos flask rather than a museum extension. It is to be a public building to stand alongside other public buildings facing on to an important public space to be viewed willingly or otherwise by the public.

This being so, why can not the building be designed using a public language rather than a private one that is at best personal, subjective and, dare one say, hermetic.

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN MELVIN  
(John Melvin Architects and Town Planners),  
The Studio, Wyndham House,  
115 High Street,  
Burford, Oxfordshire.  
June 12.

## In the headlines

From Mr Ansel Harris

Sir, The headlines "Hezbollah ambush kills 5 Israelis" and "Likud's response could spell end of peace process" were juxtaposed to cover Christopher Walker's dispatches in today's *Times*. They perhaps inadvertently reflect a less than objective reporting of, and comment on, the incident.

What would have been the response had the report of the Docklands bombing been headlined "IRA terrorist bombing causes serious damage in London" and "Major's response could spell end of ceasefire"?

Yours faithfully,  
ANSEL HARRIS,  
23 Ferncroft Avenue, NW3.  
June 11.

## Millennium wheel

From Sir David Price

Sir, Before we get too heated about the relative aesthetics of the proposed Ferris wheel on the South Bank (letters, May 27, June 4) we should remember that the first Ferris wheel was shown at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

I therefore pose the question as to whether, over a hundred years later, we cannot be rather more original. Is Britain's unique contribution to the third millennium to be the reinvention of the wheel?

Yours sincerely,  
DAVID PRICE,  
Forest Lodge, Moonhills Lane,  
Beaulieu, Hampshire.  
June 5.

## Literary role for absent fathers

From Mr G. de la Bédoyère

Sir, Dr Thomas Stuttaford (article, June 11) writes as if absent fathers are largely a modern phenomenon.

I am, at present, in the course of reading my children a variety of literary "classics". *The Railway Children* had their adventures while their father was in chokes on trumped-up charges. *The Swallows and Amazons* sailed their idyllic summer away while their father was on the other side of the world, appearing only in telegram form to approve "the Boy Roger's" participation in the voyage to the island. *The Famous Five* were routinely chauffeured to their holiday destination by a father who disappeared (with the car) back to London, not to be seen again until a driver was required for the trip home. The children who made friends with *Stig of the Dump* were on holiday at their grandmother's.

It's hardly surprising to me that, although my wife and I look after our children jointly (and work part-time to do so), other mothers telephone and ask if they can speak to "Tommy's mum" as if I was an interloper whose role should be confined to driving the car, occupying a cell, or preferably sailing in a tramp steamer in the South China Sea.

Yours faithfully,  
GUY DE LA BÉDOYÈRE,  
20 Eltham Park Gardens,  
Eltham, SE9.  
June 11.

## Sport coaching

From Mr Malcolm Brown

Sir, The recommendations of Sir Roger Bannister's working party on university sport scholarships are to be welcomed (report, June 11). The prospect of £10 million of lottery money supporting talented students throughout the United Kingdom will provide tremendous encouragement to those individuals and institutions who have struggled to promote sporting excellence without adequate funds.

Nevertheless, finance is only one ingredient in the recipe for success. Winning medals requires quality coaching. International sporting success will be achieved when there is a cadre of experienced and well resourced coaches operating at high-performance centres distributed throughout the United Kingdom.

Scholarships are necessary but not, in isolation, sufficient to produce the heirs to Eric Liddell, Roger Bannister and Sebastian Coe.

Yours sincerely,  
M. BROWN  
(Director of Sport and Recreation),  
University of Ulster,  
Newtownabbey, County Antrim,  
Northern Ireland.  
June 11.

## Mathematical tigers

From Mr M. M. Charlish

Sir, Mr Magnus Linklater (feature, June 6) states: "There is a long tradition of numeracy in South-East Asia, evidenced by a love of gambling...". If the peoples of that area are so numerate, why have they seemingly not learned that in the long run the house always wins?

Yours faithfully,  
M. McEVEN CHARLISH,  
132 Park Lane,  
Carshalton, Surrey.

## Polly Toynbee

From Mr Steve Voce

Sir, Surely you underestimate your readers by assuming that they are likely to find riveting the mating habits of Polly Toynbee and her cronies (article, June 13)?

Yours faithfully,  
STEVE VOCE,  
15 Ashbourne Avenue,  
Blundellsands, Liverpool.  
June 13.

## Modern manners

From Sir Martin Berthoud

Sir, Perhaps courtesy still exists but in a different shape from the old-fashioned variety whose demise was recently bemoaned by Bernard Levin (article, June 7). For evidence I cite recent experience on the Tube. As a deceptively youthful-looking 64-year-old (in my mind's eye at least) I was horrified the other day when a schoolgirl in her early teens got up to offer me her seat. I barely managed a semi-courteous (negative) grunt in response.

Yours faithfully,  
MARTIN BERTHOUD,  
Gillyflower,  
Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk.  
June 11.

From Mr I. Nottingham

Sir, "... want to know why the world has changed so much and so dreadfully," says Bernard Levin.

I think the change began with the television programme *That Was The Week That Was*. Perhaps Bernard Levin should have the good manners to say: "I'm sorry".

Yours sincerely,  
I. NOTTINGHAM,  
Gwynle,  
Chwilog, Pwllheli, Gwynedd.  
June 8.











